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The Sims

Exclusive! Best-Selling
Game Comes
to the
Mac

The Best Color Printer for You
Six Inkjets Compared

Summer Vacation, Your Way

Save Money and Time by Planning Online

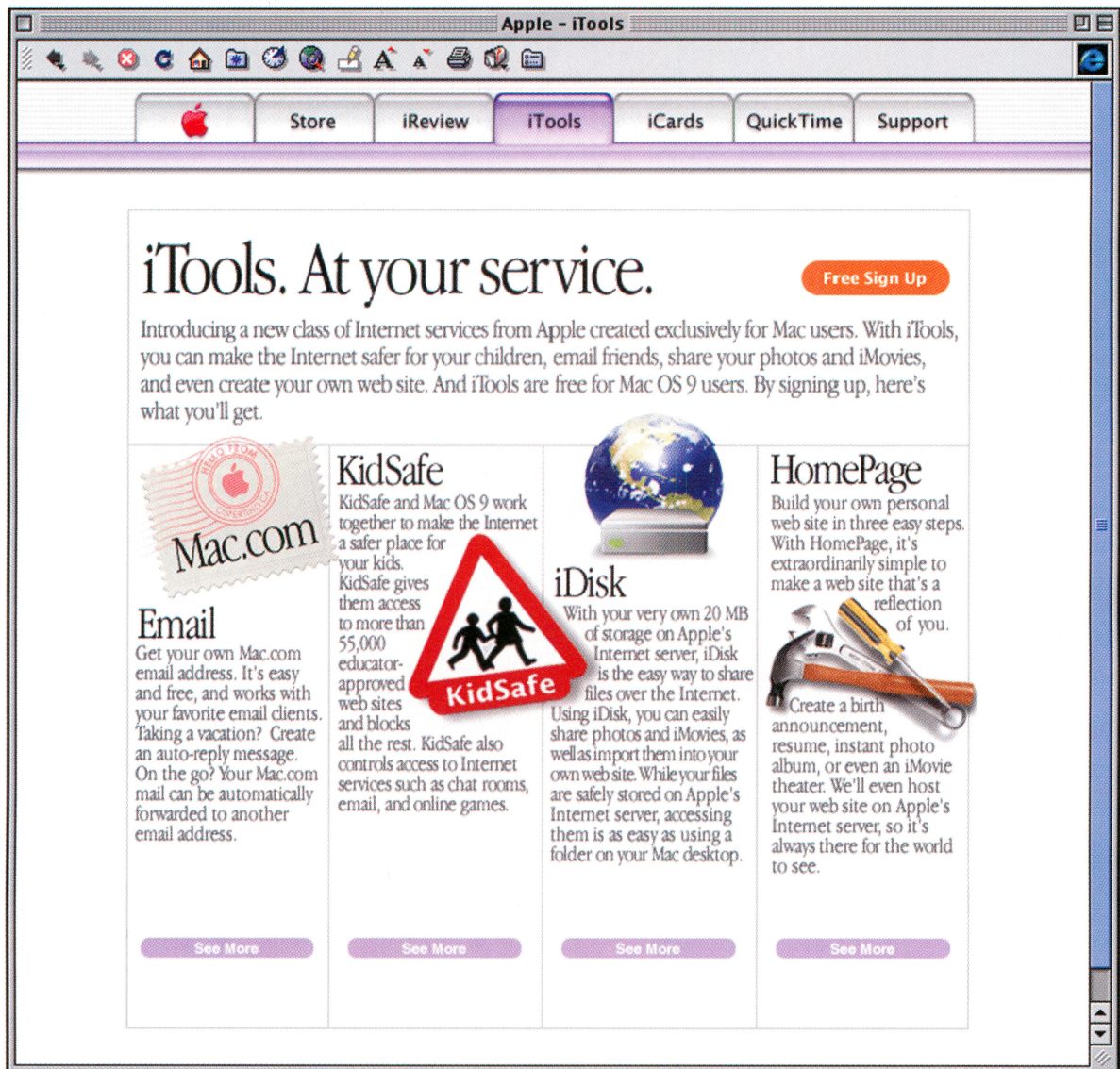


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The Travel Issue

Programming Made Real Easy _____ 16

By James Sentman

Yes, you too can program. Here, we'll teach you how create your own piece of software using REALbasic, a simple programming tool. Please, don't abuse the powers this hands-on tutorial will give you!

We're All Going on a Summer Holiday _____ 20

By Helen Bradley

It's too nice to be sitting around inside. But as long as you are, you might as well be planning your summer vacation. Here's how to do it all online — where to go, what to do, and how to get there.

Inkjets On the Move _____ 24

By Molly Wood

We corral six of the finest inkjets, round 'em up, and take 'em for a spin. Which ones show the truest colors? Which ones have the speed? Which ones are easy on the wallet? Read on.

Cover Story: The Sims Are Coming! _____ 52

By Molly Wood

Prepare for the revolution. *The Sims* are coming to the Mac.



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NewsWire

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Samsung's Newest Flats
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Face-Off: MP3 Players: The jazPiper Vs. the I-Jam

CloseUp: Power Mac G4/500MHz

CloseUp: AppleWorks 6



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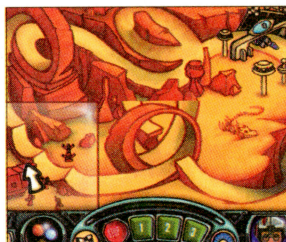
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Reviewed This Issue

Your Office: Software

★★★★	AOL 5.0	
★★★★★	DiskWarrior	
★★★★	Inspiration	
★★★★★	Katabounga	
★★★	VideoGenetics	
★★★	Watch&Smile 2.0.7	

Your Office: Hardware

★★★★	Adaptec PowerDomain 29160N
★★★	PrimeFilm 1800u Slide Scanner

Entertainment

★★★★	The Orient Express
★★★★★	Last Call
★★★★	Tomb Raider II Gold

Your Family

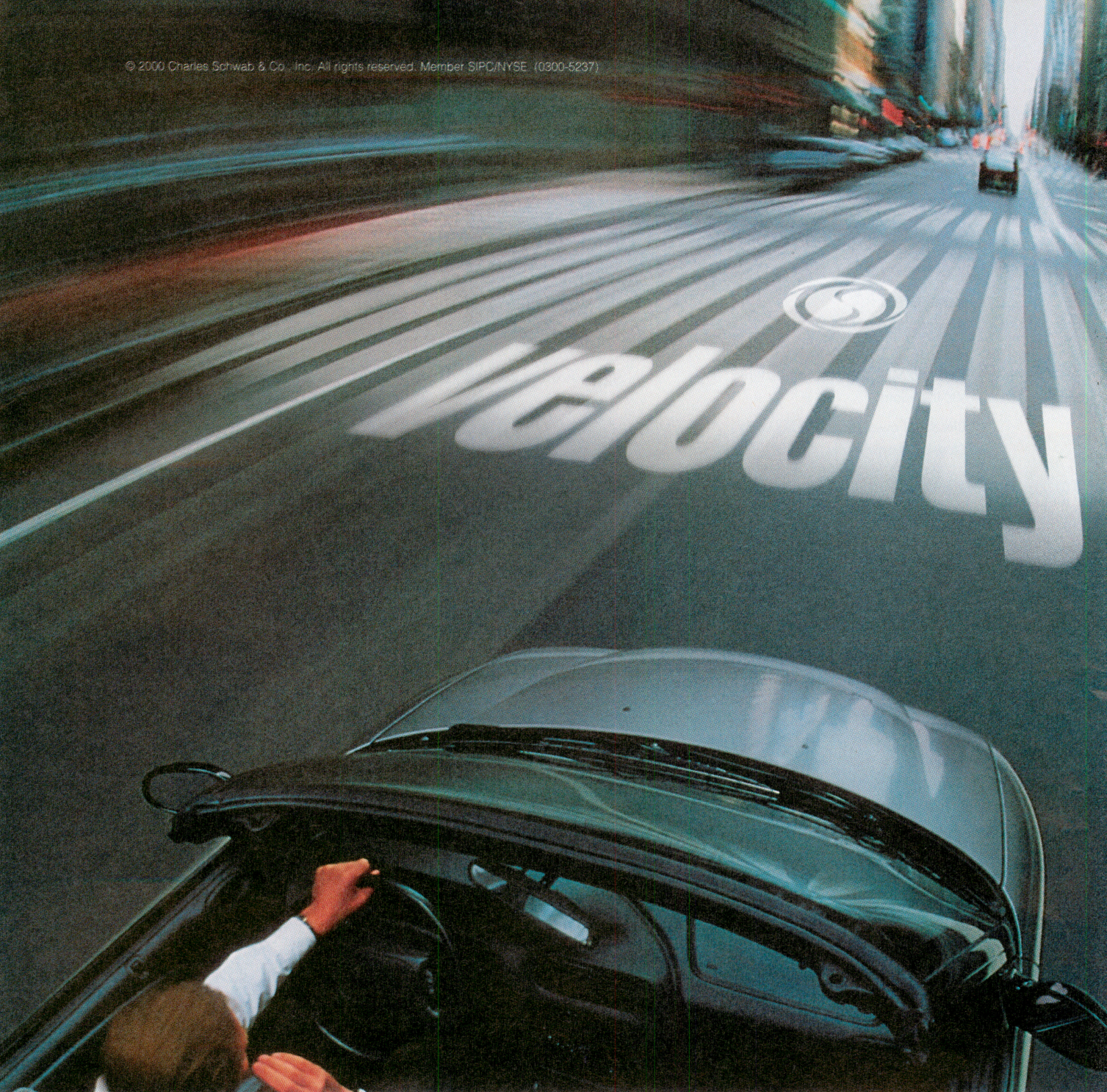
★★★★	Reader Rabbit's Playtime for Baby
★★★	Star Wars: Anakin's Speedway

Our Rating System

★★★★★	Mac-nificent. You gotta get it. No flaws.
★★★★	Excellent. Recommended even if it has a minor flaw or two.
★★★	Average. Despite problems, still a worthwhile product.
★★	Below Average. Has serious flaws that limit its usefulness or fun.
★	Poor. Avoid this product at all costs.



Indicates iMac/G3 compatibility



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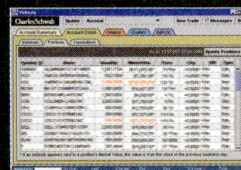
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Charles Schwab

Spring Cleaning

Ah, spring — flowers are blooming, birds are singing, and Apple is busily putting the finishing touches on Mac OS X. Just as we're clearing out our attics, getting rid of old mementos, and brightening up our homes, so Apple is doing a spring cleaning of its venerable operating system.

Apple promises that OS X will be shipping with all new Macs by this summer. I know, you've heard us go on and on about this for months, but our lives are about to get easier, and a lot more fun. If you haven't yet seen OS X in action, you can check out the Mac OS X Theater at www.apple.com/macoss/theater.html. It's

not just the fluid, practically swirling new interface — a fanciful place where windows cast realistic shadows, dialog boxes swoop in and out of the background like magic carpets, and menus are partially transparent so you can see your document

through them. No — enticing as the interface may be, it's what is supposed to be under the hood that's most promising. For one thing, the new operating system will feature protected memory, which means that if a program crashes it won't affect the operating system, so we won't have to restart, and hopefully (I'll keep my fingers crossed) we won't freeze as much.

We also know the Finder is going to look very different. Although you'll be able to switch to the conventional Finder, the new OS X Finder will show you all your files and folders in a single

window divided into sections. You'll be able to see large previews of your graphics, and moving previews of your movies. We've also heard the Chooser is going away, and because this is going to be a radical departure from the past, we won't be surprised if things like the Extensions folder, Desk Utilities, and even the Fonts folder, look very different. Rest assured, we'll keep an eye out for anything else we hear about OS X.

Here at *MacHome*, we're also doing a little Spring cleaning. Take a breeze through the magazine and you'll see that we've got a whole new look — we want to make our magazine as friendly, as accessible, and as “full-featured” as our OS of choice. We're adding a slew of new editorial tidbits, and there will be further surprises down the road. This month we're adding a new column, *Macs to Go*, all about PowerBooks, iBooks, and other portable gear, which will appear quarterly. And speaking of tidbits, Ross Tibbits, a longtime Mac user who comes to us from the turbulent world of Web production, is joining us as reviews editor.

So, enjoy the magazine, and have a great spring!



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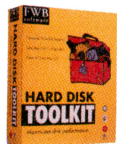


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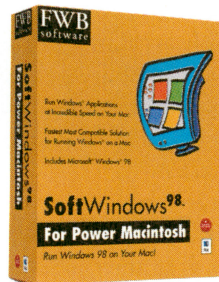
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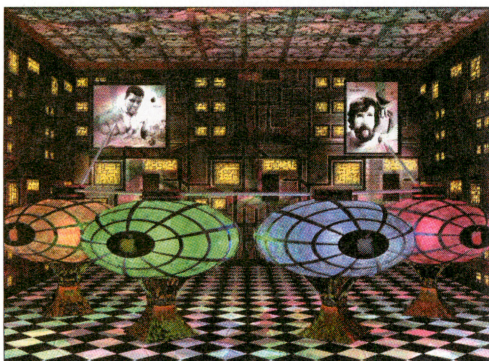
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FWB
software

Origins of the iMac

I am an otherwise ordinary office worker who struggles with Windows NT, but when I get home, I turn into ThunderMac! and spend my evenings dreaming up fun things to do with my G3/450.

Making 3D scenes with Bryce 4 is my favorite thing to do. (I've been stuck on page 124 of my second novel for several months now.) Where iMacs Come From is one of my favorite new scenes, and I



Where iMacs Come From

would like to share it with you. Feel free to do with it as you wish, even to include it in the next issue if you'd like!

Craig Chambers

✉ Thanks, Craig, for clearing that up! We always did wonder from whence these fanciful devices originated.

Speak Out!

In the past, Guy Kawasaki's EvangeList was able to mobilize the Mac faithful. If some writer was unfair to Macs, his or her ideas were made known loud and clear. Now we have U.S. Assistant Attorney General Joel Klein searching for public support for the breakup of Microsoft, and finding little. It is time the folks on the Net — both Mac and Windows — have their input heard. A call should be put out for everyone to tell Klein what they think. How do we get this started? The general public may not have an opinion of Microsoft's prac-

tices but the computer-using public sure has. There must be some way for us to express ourselves and from the things I read in the news — we don't have much time left.

Richard Cooley

Browsing the World

Sadly, I was disappointed to find that Internet Explorer 5 is still unable to display any text for a handful of Chinese (both GB- and Big5-encoded)

as well as Japanese (JIS and S-JIS) sites, which have never posed any problem for any version of Navigator. A good example is the People's Daily Chinese newspaper found at www.peopledaily.co.jp/dadi/200003/sub-home.html. Even with the font preferences properly set to either Beijing or Song, with the Simplified Chinese (GB) character set chosen, no text ever appears. Can't someone bring this to the attention of Microsoft

and motivate them to fix this omission?

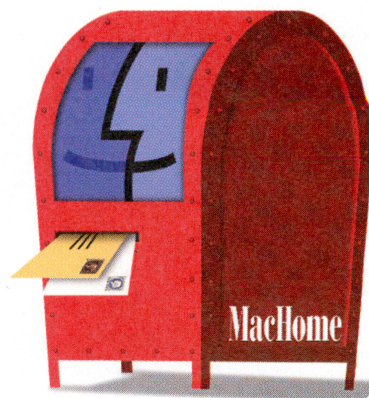
Kenneth A. Wedin

Tell it Like it Be

Please help. I might be about to lose a substantial amount of money. My best friend and I are betting on the proper pronunciation of that product called Que! The loser buys a DVD-RW for the winner. My buddy insists it's "cue," so I showed him your review with the "kay" word, and I thought I won the bet. He called the company and they said it's supposed to be "cue" as in barbe-cue. What's going on?

Giovanni Paolo G. Maloto

✉ Giovanni, I'm afraid we steered you wrong. In our July, 1999 review, we assumed that the name of this drive was the same as the Spanish word for "what," but according to Pierre Abboud, inventor and creator of the Que! Drive, who also gave the drive its name, it's pronounced



"cue." Abboud says the name is meant to evoke the Q in Quality as well as in QPS, the name of the company. It's meant to evoke the word Cue, as in taking a cue in music, or being the first in line. It's also the name of a character in Star Trek, and rhymes with the word cute. "Is there more?" I asked him, incredulously. "Oh yes," he said, "there's plenty more. It's supposed to be a playful, futuristic name."

I read on page eight of your March 2000 edition that Mac OS X is correctly pronounced "Mac OS 10." Then, after enjoying 76 more pages of your fine magazine, Andy Ihnatko tells me that Apple says the official way to say "X" in its forthcoming operating system is to pronounce the letter itself.

So please tell us, MacHome, does 10 mark the spot, or is it X?

Jeremy Gefler

✉ Okay, guys, here's the deal: X is a Roman numeral that's pronounced "ten," and Apple confirmed that that's the way to pronounce its next operating system. So where did Andy learn that one is supposed to pronounce the letter? Well, rumors get around, and pronouncing the letter is one "alternative" way to say it.

He Likes It!

After much research and reading your review I purchased the RDC 5300. I say, "Wow." This camera is a real sleeper. I absolutely love it. It seems very well balanced and just the right feel in my hands with batteries in of course.

One thing you didn't mention was the fact that the tripod mount is made of plastic. I hope Ricoh did their homework and made it out of a tough material.

I say, come on Ricoh and crank up the marketing a little on this one. It will blow the doors off the competition in the up to \$1,000 price range. Love the USB connection and the JPEG format. I would say, "Sorry Sony."

Michael Malone

iMac, Hold the Monitor

Here I sit with my 180MHz 603e Mac while my PC buddies are all going ga-ga over the latest 800MHz Windows machines. While I'd like to upgrade to a new Mac, I look at the new iMacs with DVD and think, none of my peripherals would work on it (my SCSI external hard drive, serial printer, SCSI scanner, and SCSI Zip drive) and I already have a perfectly good 17" monitor. I wonder why Apple couldn't come up with an iMac Engine — iMac without the built-in monitor but with SCSI and serial connections. This would be the Mac for "the rest of us."

William R. Trull

Hmm. Another alternative would be to hunt down a blue-and-white G3 and outfit it for SCSI and serial. This would be pretty much the same thing.

Going Dotty

Enjoyed your article on scanners [March 2000] and even purchased one based on your recommendations. However, I must point out that throughout the article you refer to "dpi" (dots-per-inch) when I think more properly you mean "ppi" (pixels-per-inch). My understanding has always been that pixels are on the screen and dots are on paper. So there's a big difference between, say, 600 dpi and 600 ppi, especially when you're talking about file size.

Jon Saalberg

Yes, you're right. But even though pixels are on the screen and dots are on paper, scanners were invented and developed during the heyday of Desktop Publishing, when print was still King. So scanner manufacturers usually describe a scanner's resolution in dots-per-inch.

write to us...

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OS X Watch

Mac OS X: What Does it Mean for You?

The arrival of Mac OS X (pronounced "ten"), Apple's radically redesigned operating system, is right around the corner. (See our March issue for more details.) So, what changes can you, as Mac users, expect to see from your favorite software? For answers to that question, we went to some major software developers and asked what they were doing to prepare their products for the debut of OS X. Here is what they said.

Extensis Suitcase — Font Utility

OS X is a vastly different operating system from the previous Macintosh operating systems, and deserves a fresh look at how fonts are managed.

The tasks that users will have to accomplish remain the same, but many of the mechanical limitations of the operating system have been removed. For example, you can open up about a gazillion fonts at one time, vs. Mac OS 9's paltry thousand. So you no longer

need a utility to do that for you. (Of course, this means that you'll have more font conflicts, missing, or mismatched fonts that will require a font manager of some sort.)

Suitcase will take advantage of the fact that OS X removes some of the mechanical limitations, and will focus instead on solving actual problems faced by font users. *Mark Niemann-Ross, Sr. Product Manager Extensis Products Group*
www.creativepro.com

Symantec — Norton Utilities/Norton AntiVirus

We're definitely planning to support Mac OS X. Because of the nature of OS X, we need to do more than just carbonization or adopting OS X design elements. In addition to whatever changes to the look and feel we might make, there will need to be significant changes in the way our products work at a technical level.

Getting to OS X is a little different than writing a productivity application that works on top of the OS. Norton Utilities for Macintosh and Norton AntiVirus for Macintosh have to go inside the OS.

We're working very closely with Apple to make changes and improvements that work with the new operating system. We expect the result will be products that are

as easy to use as they've always been, plus the changes, technical and visual, necessitated by the new OS. Mac customers expect their programs to be integrated, elegant, and polished. We're going to do that, plus a little something extra. And I'm very excited about that.

David Loomstein, Group Product Manager Symantec
www.symantec.com

Microsoft Productivity/Internet Applications

The Microsoft Macintosh Business Unit believes in Apple's OS X strategy and we're committed to creating OS X native versions of our products.

Evidence of our early OS X work was demonstrated by Steve Jobs at Macworld Expo 2000 San Francisco, where he featured an early beta version Internet Explorer 5 for OS X. We are currently working on OS X native applications and plan to deliver Internet Explorer 5 for OS X the day Apple makes Mac OS X available.

Irving Kwong, Product Manager Microsoft Business Unit
www.microsoft.com

HP's New DeskJet

Looking for an affordable inkjet? Hewlett-Packard has released the **HP DeskJet 935C** color inkjet printer for \$199. It's got a stylish gray-white casing with silver accents that will go perfectly with your iMac, G3, or G4. It's constructed with a space-saving fold-up tray and quiet operation.

The new printer is a speedy little demon, capable of spitting out up to nine pages per minute with black ink, and 7.5 pages per minute in color. You also get a manual print-cancel button, a low ink warning indicator, and automatic print cartridge alignment. It ships with the ArcSoft Photo Suite, which includes PhotoStudio, PhotoBase, and MegaStitch.

Hewlett-Packard, 800-752-0900, www.hp.com



Hub City

If you're looking for a USB hub, the newest addition to the selection is the

Keyspan 4-port hub for \$39. The unit, which is distributed by Ingram Micro, comes in graphite as well as other popular

iMac flavors. The Keyspan hub gives you two power modes. It can be used as a bus-powered hub, which draws its juice from the USB connection, or as a self-powered hub, drawing power from a wall socket.

Keyspan, 510-222-0131
www.keyspan.com



Tracking Your Tracks

Are you a fanatic about your music CDs, and need to know lots of information about each song? **TitleTrack CD Player 2.2** may be just what you've been looking for. This new version assures compatibility with the newest CD drive hardware.

TitleTrack can assist you both in cataloging and playing your music CDs. Using an online database of information on CD titles (CDDDB stands for CD Database), the program lets you access and download information such as disc title, artist, song list, musical category, and notes. The player has all of the standard audio controls and lets you create custom play orders.

Each time TitleTrack downloads information from the CDDDB, it is stored in the program's catalog where you can view, edit, and organize it. You can even drag and drop CD cover art into the display, enter or edit additional information, and link to Web pages about that CD. Download the program for free and pay \$25 for registration. *RiverSong InterActive*, www.titletrack.com

Try This at Home

Printing photographs was traditionally a job best left to the pros. Not anymore. With the **Sony UP-DP10**, a home photo printer, you can do the job yourself. The printer, for \$389, sports a vertical design and small footprint, and is dedicated specifically to printing your photographs. It features Sony's new digital photography paper that produces laminated 4" x 6" borderless prints, just like you'd order from the photo lab. It uses a dye sublimation technique (by which color ink is heated into a gas and transferred to high-quality paper) to give you professional results.

The printer connects to your computer via USB and comes with Mac printer driver software. The software automatically corrects the contrast, tone, color balance, and sharpness of your image, and gives you a finished picture in 85 seconds, the company says. *Sony*, 888-476-6972, www.sony.com

Multimedia Madness

If you are a multimedia or Web developer, this one's for you: Macromedia is shipping **Director 8 Shockwave Studio**. The new version simplifies the way you create and deliver Shockwave audio and video. The new version is more tightly integrated with Fireworks, Macromedia's Web graphics program. A new Fireworks Import Xtra lets you create buttons and rollovers, apply JavaScript behaviors to them, and then import them into Director, where they can be converted into Director behaviors.

The new version, for \$999, includes the Shockwave Multiuser Server 2 that lets you create Web communities featuring streaming audio, video, and more. It also comes with Fireworks 3, and the BIAS Peak LE 2.1 sound editor. Register online, and download 10MB of free sound clips and effects for your projects. *Macromedia*, 800-470-7211 www.macromedia.com



For the Web

Adobe Blankets the Web

If you use at least one Adobe product to develop your Website, the company has made it easier to integrate its creative packages with the introduction of **LiveMotion**. It has also unveiled **GoLive 5** and **Illustrator 9**, both new upgrades. All are scheduled for release this quarter.

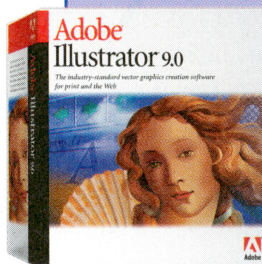
With LiveMotion, for \$399, you can create interactive graphics and animations for your Website. It is an object-oriented, vector-based application, and supports a range of formats including GIF, JPEG, and SWF (Flash).

Use LiveMotion to import entire compositions from Illustrator and Photoshop, while preserving their layers. It also features an animation timeline, auto keyframing and tweening, sound support, and vector-based drawing and shape tools.

Adobe has also released Illustrator 9 for \$399. It features built-in Web graphics and optimization tools to let you create logos, buttons, line art, and other Web graphics. It has vector-based Flash output, a Save for Web window, transparent text effects, and more.

Adobe GoLive 5 lets you edit Photoshop, Illustrator, and LiveMotion files directly within the Web authoring program. It also gives you enhanced site management, control of source code, an interactive editor that supports streaming media, and more. It will be available in June, though the price was unavailable as of press time.

Adobe, 800-833-6687, www.adobe.com



Flat Face

Businesses and students are rapidly trading their old 15-inch monitors for the more luxurious real estate of 17-inches, and for them, Mitsubishi has come out with the **Diamond Plus 73**, a \$289



flat screen Cathode Ray Tube or CRT.

The display features a 0.25mm aperture grille pitch, and a maximum resolution of 1280 x

1024 at 66Hz, complete with onscreen display controls to manipulate more than 20 different settings.

The monitor is also designed to reduce the effects of ambient lighting and to cut external reflection and glare.

Mitsubishi, 800-843-2515
www.mitsubishi-display.com

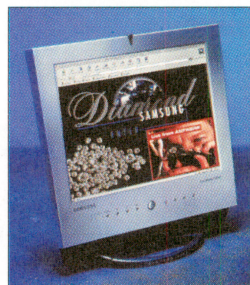
The Samsung Flats

Samsung has introduced five — count 'em — five brand new flat-screen CRT monitors. The **SyncMaster 753DF** and **755DF** at 17" and the SyncMaster 955DF at 19" are constructed with the company's DynaFlat technology to give you a flat screen display for business, home, and corporate uses. Street prices are \$272, \$295, and \$409 respectively. The

753DF has a maximum resolution of 1280 x 1024 at a 65Hz refresh rate, while the 755DF and the 955DF have maximum resolutions of 1600 x 1200 at a 65Hz refresh rate.

For more accurate image reproduction, check out the SyncMaster 700NF at 17" and the 900NF at 19", for \$318 and \$477 respectively. These monitors, part of the Natural Flat series, use aperture grille technology for professional graphics and CAD users. The maximum resolution is 1,600 x 1,200 at an 85Hz refresh rate.

If you're looking for a high-end, flat-panel display — and are willing to spend a bit more — check out the SyncMaster 150MP and the 170MP flat panel monitors, which measure 15" and 17". The MP series combines a computer monitor with a TV (complete with tuner and remote) and video display that you can use with your VCR, DVD player, camcorder, or other video devices. A Picture-in-Picture function lets you view from two sources at once. These



Affordable Camcorders

Now that you have your iMac DV, you want to make your own digital home movies, just like Steve. The new **Canon ZR10** digital video camcorder for \$999 can assist in creating your masterpiece.

Lightweight and compact at 1.5 pounds and measuring 2" x 3" x 5", this device can travel in your pocket, beach bag, or brief-



case. The camcorder features a 10X optical zoom lens and a 200X digital zoom, an image stabilizer to get rid of camera shake, a 2.5" LCD viewscreen which swivels and flips, digital photo mode for operation as a still camera, over five hours of recording time (using the optional battery pack), digital effects such as wipes and fades, and more. It comes with a FireWire interface that lets you quickly transfer your video.

Panasonic has introduced two low-cost Palmcorder DV camcorders — the **PV-DV100** and the **PV-DV200** for \$900 and \$1,000 respectively. Both feature a 2.5"

color LCD monitor, PhotoShot digital still camera, stereo audio recording, 18X optical zoom, 300X digital zoom, electronic image stabilization, special effects, a FireWire connection for high-speed transfer of your video or stills into your Mac, as well as a serial connection. The DV200 features Card Link, which lets you shoot stills on an 8MB MultiMedia Card, which is included.

Canon, 800-652-2666

www.usa.canon.com

Panasonic, 800-211-7262

www.panasonic.com

Back Up in Style

Those running a small business know that losing information can be just about lethal.

One solution may be the **VXA-1** tape drive by Ecix, which is available in a translucent design to go with your Power Mac G4. It has a 66GB capacity and a 6MB per second transfer rate. The \$1,199 drive comes with a SCSI interface, and a FireWire interface will be available later this year. The unit also comes with Dantz Development's Retrospect Desktop backup software. Ecix Corp., www.ecix.com, 877-892-8273



models are targeted toward high-end financial, medical, corporate markets, and consumers with extremely good taste. They carry street prices of \$1,287 and \$2,620 respectively. These monitors have a maximum resolution of 1,024 x 768 and 1,280 x 1,024, both with a 75Hz refresh rate. They come equipped with stereo speakers, wall mount, and remote.

Samsung, 800-726-7864
www.samsungmonitor.com

Video Special FX

Some like it sharp, but others like it blurred. If you are in the latter category, have a look at **ReelSmart Motion Blur 1.4** from RE:Vision Effects. This Adobe AfterEffects plug-in, for \$90, applies natural-looking motion blur to your video sequences by automatically



tracking every pixel from one frame to the next. There's no handwork needed, and you can add as little or as much blurring as you like. You can even use it on complex 3D animations to save time.

If you want your images and videos to look like the works of art that you know they inherently are, have a look at Video Gogh, which comes as an AfterEffects plug-in, QuickTime plug-in, and a stand-alone Macintosh application. You can also use it with Final Cut Pro.

The plug-in lets you apply effects as needed and apply different paint styles on various layers. It also gives you variable brush sizes, variable distance between brushes, and variable brush opacity, as well as three styles of painting. The Video Gogh stand-alone application is \$20; Video Gogh

Multi Keyboard

Say what you want about the standard Mac keyboard and there are any number of folks who would like a variation on the theme. A brand new keyboard on the scene is a USB multimedia unit called **iMediaKey** for \$70. Macally made this keyboard to complement your iMac and gave it a curved two-toned translucent design. This full-size keyboard features 19 programmable multimedia keys for tasks such as CD control, access to the Internet, email, and applications.



Macally, 626-338-8787

www.macally.com

QuickTime Effect is \$30 (application comes bundled); and the Video Gogh After Effects Plug-in is \$90 (with application and QuickTime Effect bundled).
RE:Vision Effects, www.revisionfx.com

Linux on the Mac

If you're the tinkering type, or there is some compelling reason why you need to use the Linux operating system, the good news is that you don't have to give up your Mac to do it.

Connectix is shipping a new version of Virtual PC with **Red Hat Linux** preinstalled for \$99, allowing you to use the PC version of Linux on your Mac. You can toggle between the Linux and the Mac operating systems at the click of a mouse without having to reboot. You also get full Ethernet support, access to PC networks, and a shared Internet connection. No need to reformat or partition your drive. Your Mac can support Mac drives and printers even while running Linux.

Connectix, 800-950-5880
www.connectix.com

Mini Doc

So you need a simple, hassle-free way to connect up all your scanners, printers, peripherals, and so forth to your iMac. Have a look at Entrega's Multifunction **USB Mini-Docking Station**, which can give you that enhanced connectivity through a single USB connection.

Surfin' Safari

You want the kids to have safe trips in cyberspace, but you worry about inappropriate Websites with adult content that may upset them. You can cast those fears aside with **Internet Safari**, the new kid-oriented Internet browser from Heartsoft, which ships in May.

Designed around a jungle safari theme, and targeted toward children ages 4-12, the software features cartoon animals and jungle sounds and sells for \$30.

Heartsoft employs artificial intelligence and advanced image detection and analysis to inspect Websites for nudity, profanity, drugs, violence, sex, hate crimes, and more. The software also gives kids hundreds of hand-selected children's Websites broken down into content channels.

Heartsoft, 800-285-3475
www.heartsoft.com

The docking station lets you use your older equipment by providing an 8-pin serial port, a 25-pin SCSI port, and two USB ports, for \$136.

It works with Palm Pilot, Zip and Jaz drives, as well as most scanners, modems, and printers.

Entrega Technologies, 949-859-8866
www.entrega.com

Get with the Program!

Create Your Own Simple Applications Using REALbasic.

If you're anything like me, you get many email addresses and

Web links sent to you every day. You may also find links in Web pages that you don't have time to visit at the moment, but that you would like to visit later. My bookmarks menu has several hundred Websites listed in it, most of them places I never got around to visiting again. One solution to this dilemma is a tiny application called "URL Window," which you can create all by yourself. URL

Window gives you a floating window where you can drag and drop any Internet URL. It will also save your URLs into a list that you can visit at your leisure. The following project will show you how easy it is to create this application in REALbasic. You can download a demo of REALbasic 2.1b2 from Real Software at www.realbasic.com.

By James Sentman

What is REALbasic?

REALbasic, RB for short, is what's known as an "object oriented" basic language. It is updated frequently and available on the Web at www.realbasic.com. The Basic language has been around for many years. It is called object oriented because your code is organized in small chunks according to the function it performs.

For example, a pushbutton is called an object. Inside of that object are all the properties, or features that affect that button, as well as the code that tells the button what you want to happen when it is pushed. This code is called an Event. It is into Events that we actually write the program. Your pushbutton has a property for its position in the window, as well as a property for the caption, and the font and font size of that caption.

Let's Get Started

Launch the RB application and you will see the toolbar, a blank, default window, and the properties window. If you don't see the Properties window when you start RB, you can open it by selecting Show Properties from the Windows menu. If you look through the toolbar you will see icons representing all the standard Mac OS controls and several special ones.

The Properties window will display the properties inside whatever object is selected, or if no object is selected, it will display the properties for the window.

The first property is the object name. Since we call all our objects by name, we want to give them a descriptive name. Change the name of our window from Window1 to URLWindow by selecting the text until it is highlighted and typing in the new name.

RB is not case sensitive, but since you cannot put a space in the name, you can use capital letters to make the name easier to read if you want. A window also has a Title property, which is located about half way down the Properties window. It says Untitled now. Change that to "URLWindow" and you will see the new name reflected immediately in the default window. We want to be able to resize the window, so put a checkmark in the Grow Icon checkbox.

Add Your Controls

Now we're going to add some controls to this window. We need a listbox to display our URLs, a button to click that lets us visit the site, and a button to remove the site from the list when we're done.

Find the pushbutton icon in the tool palette (the little OK button) and drag it into the window. Since this is going to be the Visit button, drag it to the bottom right hand corner. RB helps you position the button by giving you snap-to guidelines. Once your

button is positioned where you want it, look over in the properties window. The default name is PushButton1, but that's not very descriptive, so let's change its name to "VisitButton."

Since this window is resizable, the controls need to move also. This is one of the great interface features that you get in RB without writing a single line

of code. In the properties window for the pushbutton you will see four Lock settings. Place a checkmark next to the Lock Right and Lock Bottom properties. Now, no matter how the window is resized, the button will stay in the lower right-hand corner.

While you're editing the properties for the button, change its caption to "Visit" and check the Default property. This will draw the default highlight around the button so that you don't have to click it — you can just press return.

Right Before Your Eyes

A really fun part of working with RB is that you can watch your program take shape by running it at almost any time during development. Before you run the program it's a good idea to save it first. Save the project as "URL Window." Select Run from the Debug menu.

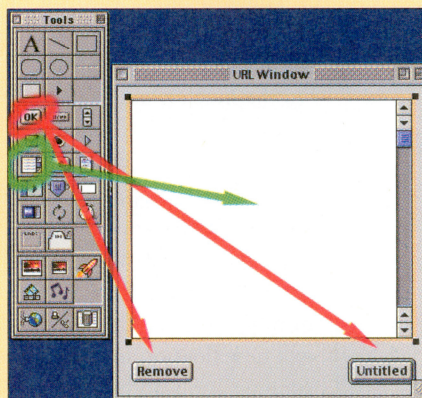
You will see your default window (called URLWindow) with the Visit button at the bottom. Try resizing the window and watch that the button repositions itself at the lower right. With this, you've got the start of a functional interface. Quit the Debug program by selecting Quit from the File Menu.

That will put you back in the RB program.

Let's add the rest of the controls. Drag another PushButton down into the lower left corner of the window. Change its name to "RemoveButton" and its caption to "Remove." Check the Lock Bottom checkbox, since this button doesn't need to move left and right, only up and down.

Now we need to create the listbox that will display the URLs. The

Listbox control is the 6th icon down on the left-hand side of the toolbar. RB will help you line the listbox up on the upper-left corner. Then resize it by clicking and dragging the little black resize widgets so that it stretches across the window and comes down to just above the buttons. Update the properties for the listbox. Change its default



The Pushbutton icon is circled in red and looks like a little OK button. The Listbox icon is circled in green

name to “URLList” and click on all four of the lock settings. This way it will resize along with the window.

Ponder Your Interface

Now we need to think a little about how we want our interface to behave. For example, you'd select a URL from the list and then click on the Visit or Remove buttons. But what if no URL is selected? We don't want the buttons enabled if there is no selection in the listbox. To prevent that from happening, place your cursor anywhere inside the URLWindow, and holding down the Shift and Command keys, click and drag a line from the listbox to the Remove button. The button will highlight, and a Binding dialog box will pop up.

There is only one selection for listboxes linked to pushbuttons, and that is “Enable RemoveButton when URLList has a selection.” Highlight that and click OK. Do the same thing for the Visit button.

With that, you are done with the interface layout for the main window. You should save and run your program again at this point. Try resizing the window and watch as the controls all move and resize properly. Your buttons should look faded, as no URLs are selected. When you're done, quit and return to RB.

Floating Windows

This project now needs a tiny floating window onto which you can drag URLs. Pull down the File menu and select New Window. This creates another empty window.

In the Properties palette, change the name of this window from “Dialog1” to the much more descriptive “DropWindow.” Also change the title to “DropWindow.” Just under the appearance label in the Property window is a pop-up menu labeled Frame. Select Global Floating Window from this menu. This window will now float on top of all running applications, and you'll be able to drag your email addresses and URLs to it without having to move windows out of the way. Since it's always going to take up screen space, you want to make it smaller than the default. Enter 40 into both the height and width properties to resize the window.

The Code

You will want to drop text into your floating window. If it gets a text drop, it needs to add that text to the

URLListbox. So now it's time to write some code!

Double-click anywhere in DropWindow to open the code editor. The Code

Editor window has two panes. On the left side is the browser and

the right is where you'll write your code. On the left you will see several headers — the open one is Events. Each control will have its own set of events, but these apply to the whole window. You should find or place your cursor in the Open event. That means the event will be run when the window opens. We need to tell the system that this window will accept text that is dropped onto it.

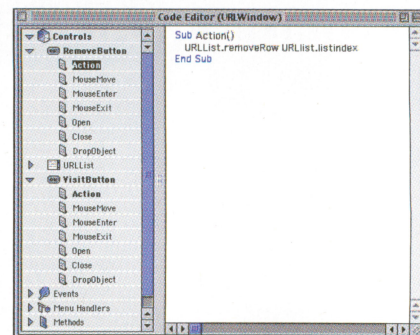
In RB, we generally access objects by their name, followed by a period, and then the desired property or method inside of that object. In this case, the object name is DropWindow and the method we are calling is AcceptTextDrop, so type “DropWindow.AcceptTextDrop” into the Open event. You may want to open the window a bit wider to see all of your changes, as the text does not wrap. If RB thinks it knows what you are typing it will show the rest of the word in gray. If RB is correct you can just hit the Tab key to accept the gray text. If it's not correct then you just type over the gray text.

As soon as DropWindow is opened, it will run this code, and the system will know that this window can accept text dropped onto it. Now we want to tell the program what to do with the text. If you scroll down a bit in the left pane, you will find an event called DropObject. Click on its name once to highlight it.

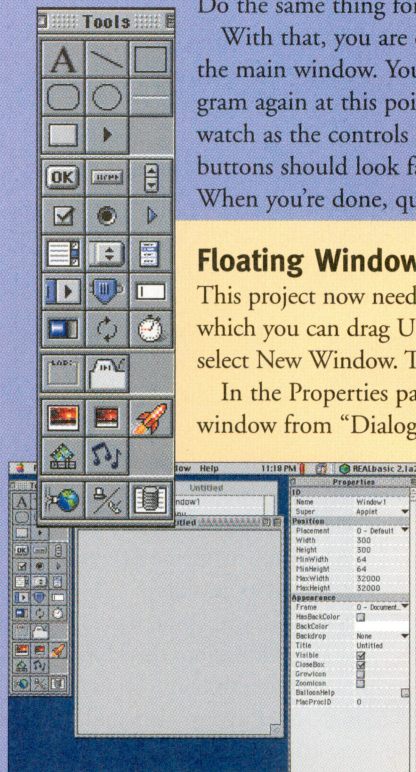
Adding a URL to the List

At the top of the code pane you will see the event name and then “obj as dragitem.” This event passes to us an object named “obj” that holds whatever was dropped onto the window. A DragItem object can contain many things, such as pictures and sounds, but for now, we are only interested in its text property. Add this line to the DropObject event: “URLWindow.URLList.AddRow obj.Text”

The URLList is inside of the URLWindow, so we call the window by name, then a period, then the name of the listbox, then a period, and then the name of the method inside of the listbox we want to call. It makes sense that a listbox would have an AddRow method, and indeed it does. Then type what we want it to add. In this case it is the Text property inside of the DropObject named “Obj.” That's all the code necessary for the floating window.



Here are the two panes of the code editor. The list of events is on the left and you write code into them on the right.



The Toolbar is on the right followed by the Default Window and then the Properties window. Behind the default window is the Project Window.

Close the Code Editor window, then close the DropWindow and go back to the URLWindow.

Visiting the URL

URLWindow needs some code inside the Visit and Remove buttons. Double-click on the Visit button. It will open up the code editor and take you right to the Action event. Any code you write here will be run whenever someone pushes the button. Now, you want to get the text that is highlighted in the listbox to open in the

proper Internet helper application.

RB is fully integrated with your Mac's Internet Config and thus knows what applications are set up for what URL types. You can launch the proper application for any type of URL with the ShowURL

command followed by the URL. You will be able to store http, ftp, mailto, news, and anything else that your Internet config is set up for. The listbox has a property inside it called Text that contains the text of the selected row. Type "ShowURL URLList.text" into this action event.

In the browser pane of the code window, scroll up inside the controls section until you see the entry for the RemoveButton. Click on the RemoveButton's disclosure triangle to open up its list and click on its action event. Here, tell the listbox to remove the highlighted row.

Removing URLs From the List

A listbox has a RemoveRow method to do this followed by the row number you want to remove. There is another property called ListIndex that is the number of the selected row. We call the listbox by its name, then a period, and the name of the method inside of it we are calling (in this case RemoveRow). So type: "URLList.RemoveRowURLList.ListIndex" inside the Action event.

This project needs to show two windows, but only the default window opens automatically. So we need to tell the DropWindow to show itself.

In the left hand of the browser scroll down below the list of controls until you see the entry for Events. Click on the disclosure triangle to open up that list. Now click on the Open event to highlight it. We want to call the method Show that is inside the DropWindow. So we call the object by name, DropWindow, followed by a period, then the name of the method inside the window, Show. Type: DropWindow.Show

Roll 'em

Let's save and run the project! Select Run from the Debug menu, and if there are no errors, you should see the URLWindow, and floating above it, the little Drop Window. Highlight some text in your email program (or a link in your browser) and drag it into the Drop Window. The link will end up in your URLWindow. Switch to the URLWindow, highlight the link, and click on the Visit button and see the link open in the helper application.

Now it's time to compile the program to make a finished, standalone application. Quit the program to return to RB and select Build Application from the File Menu. This dialog has lots of settings, but the only important one is the name of the application. When you've named it something better than "AppName," click on the Build button to compile it.

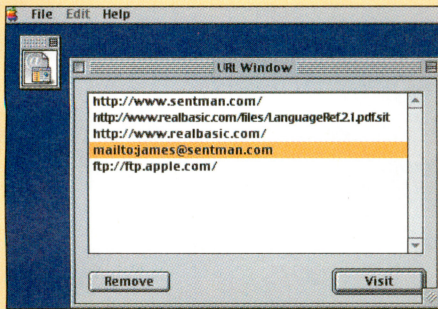
Don't Stop There

There are several more things you can do to jazz up your project. There is a PICT file called LinkPic in the project section of the MacHome Website. Drag that into the project window and select it as the BackDrop property for the DropWindow.

There is also a sound file called Combadge that you can include. Drag it into the project window and it becomes an object in the program that we can call by name. Place: Combadge.play into the DropObject event and run the program again.

There are several other things that a good Mac program should do. See the finished project file on the MacHome Website. **MHJ**

James Sentman (james@sentman.com) has been using Apple computers since he talked his parents into buying him an Apple IIe in junior high school. For the last seven years, he has been a programmer.



Here is the finished URLWindow. Drag and drop URLs to your heart's content.

Did you know?

- You can use many more types of windows in RB applications than those listed in the Properties window. To give your DropWindow a cool, horizontal menu bar enter: "1072" in the "MacProclD" field of its Properties window. For a list of available window types visit <http://www.sentman.com/>.

- With REALbasic you can build applications for older 68k Macs and Power PC Macs.

- REALbasic is compatible with QuickTime. Any kind of sound, movie, or image that you can open with QuickTime, you can use in REALbasic, including MP3 files and Flash movies!

- You can view a full language reference manual while working on your program by selecting Reference from the Windows menu, or hitting COMMAND-1. Use it to look up any of the commands or controls.



We're All Going

A Guide to Vacation Planning Online

E-tickets are taking the place of paper tickets as savvy travelers bypass travel agents and book their own vacations online. If you're heading out of town this summer, you'll find the Internet is a one-stop-shop for all your travel needs. You can book travel and accommodations, rent a car, and research your destination to decide what's worth seeing when you get there.

Planes, Trains, and Automobiles

When you know where you want to go — we'll leave this part up to you — the most important thing to work out is how to get there. Most major airlines have their own Web presence, but these sites may not always offer the best deals. And if you're not keen on flying, there are plenty of other ways to go.

The United Airlines site (www.united.com) offers fare comparisons from a number of U.S. and international carriers, as well as its own flights. It also lets you choose your seats interactively at the time of booking. There is a good Hints pop-up which details key points for scoring the cheapest ticket, including tips for days to travel and nights to stay over.

Expedia (www.expedia.com) can help you find fares from a number of airlines and it offers additional functions like Fare Compare and Fare Calendar. Fare Compare shows you the best fares that other Expedia customers are getting for the same route. If you're prepared to be flexible in your

itinerary, Fare Calendar will show you when the lowest roundtrip fares for your chosen destination are available (unfortunately not usually in the summer).

1travel.com (www.onetravel.com), also known as Cheapseats.com, is another site much like Expedia that allows you to search for competitively priced airline seats. Southwest Airlines (www.southwest.com) is one of the leading online Airline travel sites. It is an extremely easy site to get around and it has a Click 'n Save email update with weekly Internet-only special airfares.

Priceline.com (www.priceline.com) puts you in charge of your ticket cost. You select the departure and destination, airports and dates, and state what you're prepared to pay for the tickets. You must agree to fly between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M. on your nominated days of departure, and you commit to purchasing any ticket Priceline finds that meets the specifications you've set. Priceline contacts the airlines to see if any will accept your offer and if so, you are on your way.



on a Summer Holiday

By Helen Bradley

Prepare yourself for a surprise if you thought Amtrak (www.amtrak.com) was only about train travel. Amtrak can also organize your car rental, and it has deals with some airlines (e.g. Alaska and United) to offer combination fly/train packages. Also check out its RailSale — special Web-only fares that are announced every Monday.

Greyhound (www.greyhound.com) is the online site for locating Greyhound bus travel information. Unfortunately you can't book tickets online but you can buy an Ameripass, which gives you almost unlimited travel for between 7 and 60 days.

Car rental is available online from travel sites such as Expedia and Travelocity (www.travelocity.com), as well as from car rental companies themselves. You'll find it easy to compare information using a site like Expedia or Travelocity because they display price information from a number of companies at once. You can also use the Priceline.com system — you tell the car companies what you're prepared to pay and they either accept or reject your offer.

If you're driving yourself and you need directions, check out Expedia's Maps section. There are detailed state-to-state route maps as well as local maps for getting around once you get there. You'll also get approximate mileage and driving times as well as turn-by-turn maps. Travelocity also has maps, which you can select from its Travel Tools, Information Guides drop-down list.

Finally, if laying back in the sun on a fully-catered cruise is more your thing, check out 1travel, Expedia, and Travelocity, which all offer competitively priced cruises.

Where to Stay

Getting there is only half your work — you'll need somewhere to stay once you do. You'll find that Travelocity, Expedia, and 1travel all offer similar services for finding hotel accommodations in most major cities. Simply select the Hotels button and search to see what's available by city. 1travel.com helps you find accommodations if you're traveling with pets, and Expedia's VacationSpot.com offers

specialty accommodations including historic properties, rental homes, and condos.

The specialist Hotel Reservation Network (www.hotelreservationnetwork.com) offers hotel accommodations at a price cut in major U.S. and international cities. You can search hotels that have rooms available for your choice of nights. The properties are rated for your convenience and include 3 and 4-star hotels as well as budget hotels. There are location maps for the properties and a list of features for each, and the site also offers a Lowest Rate Guarantee (with few restrictions).

Hotels aren't your only choice — Bed and Breakfasts are a popular alternative. You'll find a good range of U.S. and international B&Bs on Travelocity's site (select Travel Tools, Reservations, Bed and Breakfast). The list here highlights B&Bs with their own Websites and those that have online bookings available. They also include phone and address details so you



can contact by phone if online booking isn't available.

Another good B&B site is at www.bedandbreakfast.com.

This site lists properties with price, number of rooms, and facilities. You can then click a property to obtain more information.

A similar site is Places to Stay (www.placestostay.com), which offers listings for U.S. and international accommodations including hotels, B&Bs, and resorts. You can specify a location you want and then search by availability, price, and type of accommodation.

If you're looking for more intimate accommodations, particularly if you're traveling to another country, check out homestay and farmstay options, which are popular in the U.K., Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Here you'll stay with a host family, generally in their own home, and get a chance to mingle with the locals. A farmstay will, as the name implies, allow you to get a feel for living on a farm — you might even find yourself helping out with the chores. In general, homestay and farmstay accommodations aren't as well organized on the Web as hotel accommodations, but a search for "homestay" in your favorite search engine should turn up plenty of possibilities.

If, by chance, you're headed to New

Zealand, check out New Zealand Homestays and Farmstays

(www.nzhomestay.co.nz).

This site offers a range of home and farmstay accommodations on both the North and South islands. Each property has a detailed description so you can see where it is and what it offers.

What to Do When You Arrive

Finding your way around an unfamiliar city can be a fairly simple process thanks to the wealth of maps available online. Two sites we've already indicated, Expedia and Travelocity, offer good maps for local areas, and there are other sites with local travel information that often provide useful maps.

If you're wondering what to do in another city, check out Travelocity's Destination Guide. This offers detailed information on many U.S. and international cities, including an overview of each city, key facts, activities, culture, nightlife, and dining. The text is detailed and easy to read so it's a great place to start to learn more about where you're headed, and what to see and where to eat once you get there. You can also choose Custom Guides from the Information Guides drop-down list to create your own travel guide by assembling topics you're interested in.

Travel.com offers its World Travel Guide, provided by Columbus Guides. Choose your travel destination, and you'll get access to key information about the area. There isn't as much detail here as you'll find at Travelocity, but it is a useful

place to start your research.

You'll find a more eclectic selection of resources for key locations in the U.S. by visiting Yahoo's Get Local site at <http://local.yahoo.com>. Choose the geographical area you're interested in and you can then select from sites listed under various directory headings.

If you're looking for somewhere to eat, and you're not in a major tourist city covered by the excellent Travelocity guides, try the online restaurant review site, Dine.com (www.dine.com). This site lists restaurants in most cities and, although many of the reviews are old (some are dated 1996), the listings are extensive and useful for out-of-the-way places.

Citysearch (www.citysearch.com) has detailed information about places to eat, as well as entertainment options. Ticketmaster (www.ticketmaster.com) sells tickets for events in key U.S. cities.

International travel

If you're headed overseas, you'll need a passport, currency, and detailed travel information. Travelocity and Expedia offer simple currency converters, which will convert a single amount for you from one currency to another. Oanda's Cheat Sheet for Travelers (www.oanda.com/converter/travel) is a handy currency conversion sheet that you can print and keep in your wallet. It makes good sense to take some foreign money with you — you can buy it online at International Currency Express (www.foreignmoney.com) and it will be delivered to your door.

The State Department's Travel information site (<http://travel.state.gov>) provides passport and visa information, as well as Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets, which contain a wealth of useful travel information for a range of foreign destinations.

Bon Voyage!

When you're buying travel online, be sure to always read the small print and take copies of all your confirmation numbers and emails with you in case of problems. Pack plenty of sunscreen and a hat, and have a great time — we'll be here with another jam-packed issue of *MacHome* when you return. **MHJ**



Programming Doesn't Have To Be This Difficult. It's REALbasic!

REALbasic is the award-winning, visual, object-oriented BASIC development environment for the Macintosh.

REALbasic is powerful and easy to use. Whether you want to learn (or return!) to programming, REALbasic is for you! You can build anything from simple utilities to complete professional quality applications for both Mac OS and Windows.

Simply drag and drop user interface elements into your application's windows to create anything from a small utility to a large application or the next great game—faster and easier than ever before. Experiment, explore, learn,

and innovate as you build your applications step by step while REALbasic handles all the details for you so you can concentrate on what makes your software great—your ideas! With the Professional Edition you can even access most databases and create applications that run on Windows.

Go to www.realbasic.com NOW to download a FREE trial version or call 512.263.1233.

 **REALbasic**

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Printers on the A

inkjet

Inkjet printers. These stolid workhorses of computer hardware grace homes, offices, and home offices alike. They are adored for their low prices but cursed for their noisiness and frustrating installation and maintenance. Still, no computer is complete without a printer, and inkjets are small enough, cheap enough, and good enough to meet most needs.

Suddenly, digital cameras have kicked user demands up a major notch. Users need printers capable of reproducing their digital photographs, full-color graphics, art projects, and stills from their digital movies. The demand for color inkjets isn't new, but the demand for affordable color inkjets that can produce photo-quality output is.

To that end, we've taken a look at what's new in inkjets. Most of the new printers you'll find on the market these days boast high-quality color output, many include photo-specific printing tips, and some even come with gadgety photo extras, such as special slots and attachments for 4" x 6" prints. We wondered if they still manage that inkjet reliability.

Who's On First?

Witness the results. We tested two new printers each from Hewlett-Packard, Epson, and Canon. (Please note, however, that at press time Hewlett-Packard unveiled an as-yet unreviewed inkjet, the DeskJet 932C, which boasts colors complementary to the iMac, G3, and G4 computers. It was to ship in early spring. Rest assured, we'll have it reviewed in a jiffy.)

Move

By Molly Wood

Each company sent a printer in its lower price range, as well as a higher-priced model. The cheapest printer we reviewed was the Epson Stylus 670, which retails for \$119. Each printer was rated for ease of use, print quality of photos and text, speed, and economy (a combination of price and price-per-page), and given an overall rating, in apples, of course.

Hewlett-Packard

Both HP printers we tested proved to be the kind of solid, dependable printers inkjets should be. While both printers had mixed results in terms of quality, each is reasonably priced and so easy to use that the utter lack of frustration alone recommends them.

The 840C, in many ways, set the bar for all printer tests to follow. It was almost laughably easy to set up. Its ink cartridges snap into place with absolutely no fuss. The software is easy to use, with an intuitive interface and a series of tests after installation that includes cleaning and/or recleaning the ink cartridges. It also calibrates and aligns your ink cartridges on its own, without asking you to choose the best settings. Best of all, the 840C is virtually silent — a real rarity in the printer set, and one that was appreciated by this reviewer.

The 840C is, unfortunately, a nondescript beige box that just didn't look all that appropriate next to the iMac DV Special Edition. But you can't have everything, and for about half the cost of its bigger brother, the 952C, you might be willing to put up with its not-quite-as-cute appearance.

The 840C proved to be an extremely able printer, but nothing spectacular in terms of output. It also took nearly 10 minutes to print our elaborate high-resolution test print, which includes photos in black and white and color, curved lines, various text sizes, color gradients, and a rainbow box.

The 840C is capable of printing up to 1200 dpi (dots per inch) on photo paper, and its photo output was certainly serviceable, if a tiny bit grainy. Dots are clearly visible in its output of a high-resolution photo. Its work on a low-resolution photographic image was quick and serviceable, but the 840C really excels at text production. It was the best of the printers we tried in terms of text, in fact — its text production rivaled a laser printer. As with every printer we tested, the 840C has both parallel and USB connectivity.

The HP 952C was a little harder to set up than its pared-down companion, largely because it has this tricky photo printer tray where you can insert 4" x 6" photo paper. It made for some confusing setup, but it's a pretty neat feature once you get it working. The software and cartridges were equally breezy, and the 952C gets some points for being far more attractive than the 840C. It's gray with purple accents and it has the revolutionary optical calibration feature, which manifests



Canon BJC-3000



Epson Stylus 670

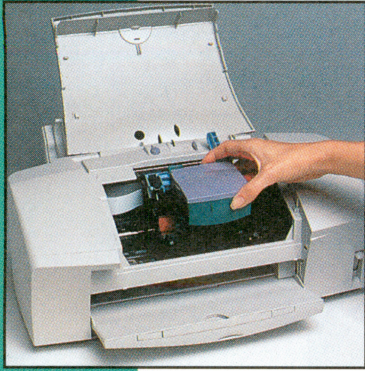


Hewlett Packard 952C

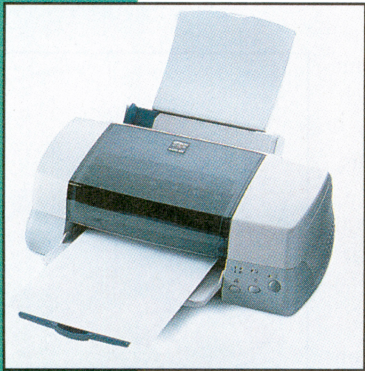
Six Printers Compared, or: The Real Value of Pictures

itself as a little blue light on either side of the print heads — when the print heads slip out of alignment after months of use, you can have the printer recalibrate itself, much as it does in the first use. It was slightly noisier than the 840C, however.

The 952C smoked through the test graphic in just over four minutes, and turned out a much more attractive low-resolution graphic print. While still a bit too coarse, the 952C is clearly a printer designed to print photos. Its photo mode lets you print up to 2400 dpi (2400 x 1200 dpi on photo paper). Its colors were richer and its gradients smoother than its cheaper counterpart, and the slick, glossy photo paper slides through like glass for a super-fast print. Its text production was fairly decent, too, but all in all, the 840C turned in a decent, no-fuss performance that seemed to outpace its big brother in pound-for-pound ability.



Canon BJC 8200



Epson Stylus 670



Hewlett Packard 842C

Epson

Ah, Epson. So hearty. So dependable. So traditional. But so ... noisy! On the lower end of the budget scale, Epson offers its Stylus 670, which can be had for a song — just \$120.

Unfortunately, it's, well, a cheap printer. It's attractive and streamlined and all, but right out of the box it starts making those old clacking, whirring printer sounds we've come to despise over the years. Installation isn't quite as intuitive as it could be either — the printer software has a clunky, hard-to-use interface and the directions are a bit vague ("install photo paper with the whitest side facing up"). It's also hard to find a test page, or to figure out how to calibrate the print heads.

Epson's higher-priced model, the Stylus Photo 870, is a bit larger, sturdier, and quieter, but suffers the same setup issues. It's nice-looking, too, in smoky gray with purple accents, but it's a little intimidating, what with add-ons such as a rolling paper holder, and instructions for various forms of photo printing. The rolling paper add-on, however, lets you print large or panoramic photographs from 3.5" x 3.5" to

8.5" x 44" paper, which is high on the coolness scale. The 870 is much quieter than the 670, but still noisier than most of the others we tested.

The 670 took nearly seven minutes to reproduce our high-resolution test page, and while its text, curved lines, and rainbow color-matching were admirable, its photo quality was washed out and way too coarse. It promises 1440 x 720 dpi, but the 670 just can't solve the dots-visible-to-the-naked-eye conundrum — usually not a problem for Epson. Our low-resolution image took an impressive 57 seconds and wasn't too ragged, but the 670 makes so much noise reproducing text (which looks only average when it's finally complete) that it's nearly unbearable. The 670 can't be beat in terms of price, but it's underwhelming in quality and irritatingly loud, which made it feel clunky and out-of-date.

The 870 is a pretty impressive printer for photos and panoramics with no margins, and was hands down the fastest printer we tested in terms of color image and photo output. It shares the same maximum resolution as the 670 — 1,440 x 720 dpi — but its colors were noticeably richer and its photographic images much sharper. The 870 doesn't, however, reproduce text particularly well, and on its quality setting, it took over two minutes to print a single page, with lower quality than the HP 840C, which is half the price.

Both Epson printers get gold stars for a printing interface that includes a graphic showing ink levels in the printer cartridges, so you know how soon to run out and get new ones.

Canon

Canon turns in two wildly differing entries here, and illustrates better than we ever could the reasons for spending more money on a printer. At least, they would illustrate those reasons if there weren't four other perfectly good printers (see above) for prices more reasonable than Canon's high-end inkjet.

Canon is relatively new to the Mac color printer market, and gets some kudos from the get-go for offering four separate color cartridges, so each one can be replaced as it gets low. This saves you from having to throw away an entire ink cartridge that may still have plenty of ink, just because another color runs out. However, all those little cartridges — each individually triple-wrapped in cellophane (waste not, want not!) — make for some annoying installation.

The cartridge installation is high-pressure, too, since there is a greater possibility, however remote, of serious spillage.

We looked at the BJC 3000 and the BJC 8200, both of which boast a Color Management System, designed to reproduce color perfectly from Websites, graphics, or photographs.

The BJC 3000 retails at \$150. The installation soft-

ware has a pretty cute interface, but the vaunted Color Management System, I was informed, cannot be installed without Apple ColorSync 2.0 or later. This is, of course, not provided on the CD-ROM, and there were no hints about where to find it (www.apple.com, by the bye).

Once it was working, the BJC 3000 proved not only slow but actually appalling in terms of output. Its reproduction of our low-resolution image was dark and grainy, with visible horizontal lines across the entire image. The photo quality was even worse: dark, and with dots so big you could actually put pen marks in between them if you used a fine point. The entire photo itself was streaked with ghostly horizontal lines. The black and white image was dark, and nearly navy in color, gradient colors were tinted with black to the halfway point, and text was fuzzy and virtually unreadable all the way up to 10 points. Its text reproduction was inconsistent, with some words appearing to be in italics and others appearing as if in bold text. The BJC 3000 prints just 360 x 360 dpi on regular photo paper, and says it scoots all the way up to 1,440 x 720 dpi on specialty paper, but that's what we used on our test graphic, and the resolution left much to be desired.

The Epson 670 may have been underwhelming at \$120, but it's certainly serviceable, and the \$150 HP 840C is a strong, solid printer for the same price as the BJC 3000.

Compared to the more expensive printers we looked at, the BJC 3000 is amateurish at best, and compared to printers in its own price range, it's inexcusable.

Canon redeems itself somewhat with the BJC 8200. With this printer, the separate cartridges seem more thrifty than annoying, and if you've kicked down \$400 for this printer, you'll be ready to save some cash. The 8200 actually comes with six separate cartridges, two of them specialty colors for photo printing.

The BJC 8200 is a bit larger than the BJC 3000 — though both come in bland beige — and seems quite a bit sturdier (the BJC 3000 actually shakes with the effort of printing, like a powerlifter struggling under a huge load).

The 8200's photo print quality is truly outstanding. Nary a dot is visible in photos, and the black and

white production is crisp and perfectly contrasted. Colors are rich and easy to differentiate, and the 8200, unlike every other printer we tested, had absolutely no problem recreating color gradients without creeping black lines or dots.

It also did a stellar job reproducing curved lines and tiny, tiny text. It was extremely fast, jetting out the high-resolution test page in just over three minutes. The lower-resolution image turned out lovely as well, with plenty of contrast and few ragged edges. Text production was a bit smudged, however.

In all, the BJC 8200 does what you'd expect a \$400 printer to do. However, the Epson 870 also does what you'd expect a \$400 printer to do, and it does it for only \$300. An 8" x 10" photo print still costs \$.54 per page with the 8200, despite its clever cartridge-changing trick, and that just doesn't make it much of a bargain. If it's money-be-damned quality you're looking for, the 8200 won't disappoint. But it's certainly not a *Consumer Reports* kind of buy.

The Dotted Line

As with any collection of similar products, a clear winner did not necessarily emerge. If we had to choose (and it looks like we have to), the Hewlett-Packard 840C has the most loaded plate in terms of value, and that's the bottom line, after all. It may not offer the same photo quality as a higher-priced printer, but it's more than adequate, and it's got fantastic text reproduction. It was the only printer we tested, in fact, that turned out high-quality text prints, and its photo reproduction was extremely impressive for its price. It was also the easiest printer to use — the only one that provided absolutely no hassle.

If you're willing to spend more, the Epson Stylus Photo 870 is the best printer for its price, but the Canon BJC 8200 wins the photo quality matchup hands down. It turned out phenomenally high-quality photo prints with blazing speed, but had only mediocre text production and, at \$400, seemed a bit pricey for its output. For the avid digital photographer, however, it could prove an excellent investment. As with any experiment in comparison, the results are subject to your individual needs. **MHJ**

Printer	Price	Ease of Use	Print Quality, Photo	Print Quality, Text	Speed	Economy	Overall Rating
Hewlett Packard 952C	\$300	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Hewlett Packard 840C	\$150	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★
Epson Photo 870	\$300	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Epson Stylus 670	\$120, w/ \$30 rebate	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★
Canon BJC 3000	\$150, w/ \$50 rebate	★★	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★
Canon BJC 8200	\$400	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★

Play it Safe!

How to Avoid Losing Your Valuable Business Assets

Face it. If you're in business for yourself — short of an IRS audit — there's nothing quite as terrifying as the thought of losing your business assets. And yet, if you're really honest, you'd likely confess that you're probably not protecting them the way that you should. To that we shout a hearty "Shame On You!"

But rather than simply scolding you and moving on, we're here to provide you with a multitude of ways to keep your business hardware and data fully intact. With a good plan in place, you can expect to bring your business back into ship-shape even if the unthinkable befalls you.

Getting a Grip on What You Need to Protect

Before you begin putting together a disaster recovery plan, you need to have a firm idea of what you'll need to replace if

By Jeff Battersby

something cataclysmic happens to your small business or home office.

And while we shudder at the thought, fires, floods, and earthquakes are calamities you should take into consideration. What would you need to replace if everything in your office was physically destroyed?

Taking Inventory

If you haven't done it yet, now is the time to take an actual inventory of everything your business owns. This inventory should include photographs, purchase prices and dates of everything from fax machines, printers and computers to file cabinets, desks, and chairs. You should also document all the software you've purchased over the years, writing down serial numbers and other pertinent information. If you own a copy of Quicken or FileMaker Pro, you'll be pleased to discover that each of these programs provides you with inventory templates complete with spaces for cost, depreciation, and digital photographs.

Once you've created your inventory, you should store copies — both printed and on disk — someplace secure like a safe deposit box or a fireproof safe. Your inventory



will be useless if it's destroyed in the same incident that wiped out your physical assets.

Making Sure Everything's Covered

I speak from experience here ... if you run a business from your home, you'll want to make absolutely certain that your homeowner's or renter's insurance covers the tools of your trade. In most cases — unless it's explicitly stated in your policy — standard insurance policies do not cover computers, printers, faxes, and the like. To gain coverage for these items you'll need to add an addendum to your policy. I made this discovery when one of my children accidentally stepped on my PowerBook, putting a giant crack in the display. When I called my insurance agent to see about getting the screen replaced I was told that I didn't

have a rider and that my PowerBook wasn't covered. I've since added coverage for all of the business equipment used in my home, but unfortunately it was about a thousand dollars too late.

Protecting Your Hardware

Until you've actually had a lightning strike blast your Mac into oblivion or a power surge push your printer over the edge, getting a high-quality surge protector may seem like overkill. Why should you spend twenty dollars for something that you can get for as little as a five? The answer is protection. Believe it or not, even if your computer is covered under your insurance policy, a lightning strike or even a minor surge from your local power authority, still may not be covered. (Although, in the case of power surges, you should check to see if your electric company is liable.) High quality suppressors, from companies like American Power Conversion (APC), provide you with guaranteed protection. If some errant surge does find its way to your computer, or other hardware, these surge suppressors will ward off any damage. And what if they don't? If it can be verified that one of these surge suppressors didn't protect your machine, the manufacturer will pay to replace your damaged equipment. Be sure to read the manufacturer's product information so that you are certain that you are correctly using the device and thus ensuring coverage.

If the area that you live in is prone to power outages, you may want to consider buying a battery Universal Power Supply (UPS) backup. These systems provide a surge suppressor and a battery that will keep your system up long enough for you to save your data and shut down properly. These are sold by APC and Tripp Lite.

Protecting Your Data from Day-to-Day

Okay, so we've seen what you need to do to take care of your hardware. But everybody knows that hardware is only half the battle. So here's the scenario: You've kept wonderful track of all of your equipment. Your lists are complete and the insurance company hands you a check that's more

than sufficient to replace everything that you owned. You've repurchased all of your equipment and you've happily re-equipped your office with brand new hardware and software. But suddenly you realize your hardware wasn't the only thing that you needed to protect. Your business is made up of data and if your data is gone so is your business. Accounting files, contact lists, and a lifetime of other information, all of which you need to run your business, are now lost forever; and with them, so is your business.

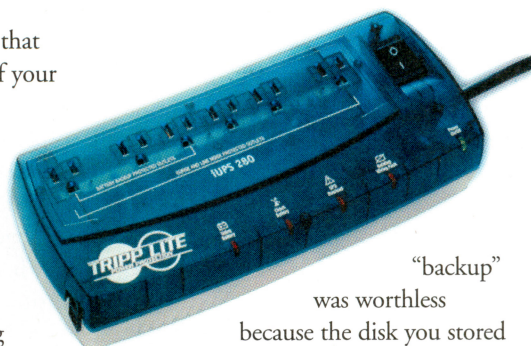
Building a Better Backup

Your data is the key to your business. Having a plan that guarantees you'll be able to recover that data is absolutely essential. There are a couple of rules-of-thumb that will help to make sure you can recover your data in case of an emergency.

Personally, I don't worry too much about backing up application software. I can easily get the CDs and reinstall the software. However, what I do make sure I save are my documents and other volatile material, like my accounting data and my client database. And, if you've created any of your own software or database applications, you'll want to make sure that those get backed up as well. In short, anything that can't be easily recovered from some other source needs to be backed up.

Back Up Often: Your backup plan should be designed to recover all of the data you need. If you are making changes to your data on a daily basis it makes sense that you should back up those changes on a daily basis as well. Most backup software — like Dantz Retrospect — provides some means of automatically backing up your data. This makes saving your business data an almost effortless process. All you need to do is make certain that a backup disk is in the drive, and the software takes care of the rest.

Rotate Your Backup Media: There's nothing worse than discovering that your



"backup" was worthless because the disk you stored it on was damaged. Depending on the type of media you're using, it may need to be replaced after as few as 100 uses. If you're still using floppy disks for backups you should stop now. Floppies are notoriously volatile and should not be considered safe backup media. Look into Zip or Jaz drives as an alternative. Also, you should be aware of what conditions promote disk health. Make sure you're

news flash...

Signature services members of **Charles Schwab** now receive **Velocity Desktop** software, which runs off your Mac but integrates with the Web for a much faster trading experience than using the Web alone.

www.schwab.com

storing your disks in a clean, cool, smoke-free, and dry environment.

Store Your Backup Off-Site: It's hard to imagine anything worse than discovering that all of your data files — including your backups — were destroyed in the same incident. If you can move your backups to some location that's offsite, you're guaranteeing that you won't lose your data. If your office and your home are in the same location, consider purchasing a fireproof safe where you can store your backups. Make sure that the safe you purchase is capable of withstanding any type of damage it might sustain, including high-intensity fires, floods, and earthquakes.

Maintaining System Health

Fires, floods, and earthquakes are not the only cataclysms poised to wipe out your

business data. The worst evils can reside right within your own computer. Making sure that your entire system is in the best of health will make it possible for you to gain years of use from your Macintosh and will guarantee that your data is created, saved, and stored properly.

Virus Protection

There was once a time when viruses on the Macintosh were almost nonexistent. In fact, prior to about three years ago, I can only recall seeing one actual virus "in the wild." But times have changed. If you're using any of Microsoft's Office products, and especially if you're sharing those files with other people or downloading files from the Internet, you'd be foolish not to have some type of virus protection on your computer. In the old days viruses could only be contained in applications; you'd never find a virus stored in a document. Now, because of Microsoft's powerful, application-based programming language, Visual Basic for Applications, viruses can be contained within a document, making it possible for you to set off a destructive virus simply by opening a document.

Virus protection programs come with one caveat though: they're only as good as their latest virus database update. Most programs — like Virex or Norton AntiVirus — provide you with free monthly updates and direct access to those updates from the Web. But bear this in mind: The virus software that you just purchased from your favorite software outlet is likely to be several months behind. Run, don't walk, to the program's Website to download the latest update.

Disk Maintenance

So this is how you spend your days: opening files, saving files, closing files, starting and restarting your Mac, installing and removing software, with the occasional system crash to keep you on your toes. Do you have any idea what kind of havoc this wreaks on

the average hard drive? Without some regular maintenance you'll soon be spending more time solving problems than doing actual work. Disk maintenance is the digital equivalent of flossing your teeth: when practiced regularly, it maintains a healthy, happy operating environment.

There are three things you should do to make certain your hard drive is at its best. First, rebuild your Desktop Folder at least monthly. The Desktop Folder is a database that stores information about everything on your hard drive. Rebuilding it makes certain that it has the best and most up-to-date information. While you can perform this task by simultaneously pressing the Command and Option keys during startup, the best way is to pick up a copy of the freeware program, TechTool. Instead of a simple rebuild, TechTool wipes out your old Desktop Folder and builds a brand new one on your next restart, guaranteeing a fresh new database. Second, verify and optimize your hard disk. For this you'll need either the full version of TechTool — called TechTool Pro — or the latest copy of Norton Utilities. These verify your hard drive(s), checking it for errors — like physical damage to the disk itself — and tells your Mac not to write data to areas that are bad. Optimizing your hard drive makes the disk heads work less and promotes longer disk life.

Finally, pick up a copy of DiskWarrior. This utility (version 2.0 is reviewed in this issue) makes certain that your hard drive's directory structure — the map that your computer uses to access all the data on your hard drive, including the information stored in your Desktop Folder — is at its absolute best. Corrupted directories can lead to corrupted files on your Mac, which can lead to system crashes or files that are no longer usable.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Cliché? Yes. But when it comes to protecting your business' most precious assets, it's all too true. **MHJ**

Resources

Surge Protectors

American Power Conversion (APC)
From \$9-\$100
401-789-5735
www.apcc.com

Sophisticated Circuits, Inc.
From \$70-\$100
800-769-3773
www.sophisticated.com

Tripp Lite Worldwide
From \$9-\$110
773-869-1111
www.tripplite.com

Kensington Technology Group
From \$20
650-572-2700
www.kensington.com

Backup Software

Backup Mastery
\$130, CharisMac Engineering Inc.
916-885-4420
www.charismac.com

Drag n' Back
\$50, Enterprise Software
408-749-9802
<http://members.aol.com/realip/index.html>

Retrospect
From \$50, Dantz Development Corporation
800-225-4880
www.dantz.com

Backup Hardware

Iomega
From \$100-\$350
801 332-1000
www.iomega.com

Disk Utilities

TechTool and TechTool Pro
Free and \$98, Micromat
800-829-6227
www.micromat.com

Norton Utilities
\$100, Symantec Corporation
408-253-9600
www.symantec.com

DiskWarrior
\$70, Alsoft
800-257-6381
www.alfsoft.com

Port Authority

Make VST your Port Authority for all things Macintosh. USB or FireWire®. VST's got the products that meet your computing demands.

USB products range from the Floppy Drive with color kit and the palm sized Hard Drives to the portable CD-RW Drive and the versatile Tri-Media Reader.

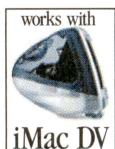
For FireWire ports, VST's FireWire products are the perfect fit. From the popular ultra-slim Hard Drives and Zip250 Drives to the new FireWire RAID Array, storing and transferring your files is a breeze.

USB and FireWire ports, now on the new PowerBook G3, give users the best of both worlds. And with the added convenience of an expansion bay, VST's expansion bay storage devices and power accessories, built with your productivity and portability in mind, gives new meaning to the phrase "take it outside."

So whichever connection you prefer, make VST your Port Authority. Visit www.vsttech.com to learn more about these and other VST products.



VST
www.vsttech.com



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I Want My MP3

The jazPiper Vs. the I-JAM

If the level of excitement around our office is any indication, the new line of Mac-compatible MP3 players is going to be very popular. Co-workers are literally lining up at my desk to get a look at these cutting-edge devices. Although MP3 players have been available for PC users for some time now, Mac enthusiasts have had to wait while software was developed for the Mac.

MP3 — which stands for MPEG 1, Audio Layer-3 — represents a revolution in the way music is recorded, stored, and played back. This technology takes music and converts it into a digital format so that it can be read as an MP3 file. These near—CD quality files can be stored on your computer's hard drive or on other devices such as SmartMedia and MultiMedia cards which you can plug into your MP3 player. Some MP3 players have both internal storage and ports for these memory cards.

This technology has many benefits. No longer do you have to worry about bulky cassettes or CDs! The MP3 files

are stored in your MP3 player or on tiny cards that store between 16 and 32MB a piece. The only downside is

that the 32MB SmartMedia cards presently cost \$99.

Unlike cassettes and CDs, the MP3 players will not skip because there are no moving parts. Everything is digital. This is particularly important to active individuals who take their music with them when they exercise.

Perhaps the greatest features of the MP3 players is that you are able to download music directly from the Web. This eliminates the need to drive to the music store and spend considerable amounts of money on CDs. From now on you can choose from a wide selection of artists on the Web, and download individual tracks to your home computer. From there you can arrange them in any order you like and import them to your MP3 player. If you have CDs that you want to convert to MP3 format, programs like SoundJam (www.soundjam.com), are available for free.

By Ross Tibbits



Now that you have a better understanding of what the MP3 players are made of, let me introduce you to a couple that we have had the pleasure of reviewing here at *MacHome*.

Jazz It Up!

The first thing that strikes you about the jazPiper is its small size, close to that of an audio cassette and weighing a mere 74 grams without batteries or the belt clip. Next you are struck by its cool blue case — very iMac. But, beyond the visual and tactile interface, this device keeps shining below its translucent skin.

Having no prior experience with MP3 audio players I expected little more than to review a music-playing device. The jazPiper is more than just that! To my surprise it also has voice recording and telephone book features.

jazPiper comes with installation software, a user's manu-

al, headphones, connecting cables, and a belt clip. Once I loaded the software onto my Mac I plugged the jazPiper into the SCSI cable. This cable needs to be attached to the provided adapter that converts it into a USB device for your newer Mac. This is a nice feature, and it means that no one has to buy the converter cable separately.

When I had everything hooked up I was ready to start downloading the MP3 files that I had previously obtained from the Web. It wasn't quite as straightforward as I had hoped. As it turned out, I had the cable that plugs into the jazPiper plugged in upside down. You see, it fits either way, but there is an arrow on one side that is hard to see. Unfortunately, the instructions don't make mention of this.

Once correctly connected, I made use of the software to transfer MP3 files from my hard drive onto the MP3 player. It is a very uncomplicated process. The software provided with the jazPiper is simple to understand. It is as easy as opening the jazPiper desktop program, finding the files you want to transfer, and dragging them onto the MP3's Internal Memory window. In a matter of minutes I was grooving away to near-CD quality digital music. Navigating from song to song was as simple as pressing the main function button, which also lets you fast forward or reverse within songs. Your listening pleasure is extended to a total of 12 hours with the help of two tiny AAA batteries.

Unlike some portable cassette and CD players, this device has no adjustments for treble, bass, or balance. Rather, jazPiper offers you four different settings depending on the kind of music you are listening to: Pop, Rock, Classic, or Normal. These settings vary the bass and treble levels in the device. Although the manual does not define how these settings differ, you can easily find a setting that suits the music you are listening to.

The jazPiper is versatile. If you want to dictate a thought or message into it, just press the Mode button and then the Record button. It will immediately start recording your voice. The microphone will record sound clearly within about 25 inches

of the source. If your storage devices are empty, and your batteries charged, you can record for up to two hours with each 32MB of storage. This makes it great for taking verbal notes or even recording a conversation.

Another useful tool is the Telephone Book. By entering names and telephone numbers into the installed software on your computer and transferring the files, you can place up to 250 numbers into memory.

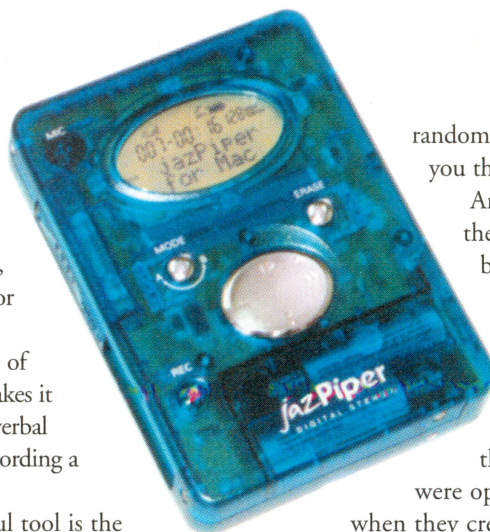
I-JAM on This

To call the I-JAM cool-looking is an understatement. This device is even smaller than the jazPiper, and shaped like a large kidney bean. It has a very translucent cover that is red on the top and clear on the bottom.

I was able to load the I-JAM CD and install its two programs onto my Mac's hard drive without difficulty. The first program allows the Mac to interact with the I-JAM's USB "reader" — a nifty device that you slide one of two 16MB MultiMedia cards into. This card then appears on your desktop as a floppy disk. Next, you simply drag MP3 files onto the floppy. Pull the card from the reader and slide it into the I-JAM player and you are ready to go. The second program, SoundJam, lets you translate CD tracks into MP3 format. Think of the flexibility you are offered here. Take your favorite selections from your CD collection and create new music disks.

The I-JAM comes loaded with some great features as well. The standout feature is an FM radio. The I-JAM's simple menu allows you to easily find your favorite radio station, or you can use the scanning feature to pick up the strongest broadcasts. There are three memory presets as well.

Like some home CD players, you can select a portion of a music track and listen to it continually, a loop of sorts. But if this isn't your piece of cake, perhaps the



random play mode will give you the variety you need.

Another neat feature is the separate treble and bass adjustments that allow you to fine-tune your music just the way you like it.

It's not as though the developers were operating in the dark when they created this device, but if you are in the dark and want to adjust your music, the I-JAM will illuminate its small display for you at five-second intervals.

One of the few drawbacks of this device is its lack of storage options; it only comes with 32MB of external storage. This is a small price to pay for such a small device, and it is partially corrected by giving you the option of recording at three different compression rates. This allows you to record more music with the same amount of memory, but the trade-off is sound quality, which suffers from compression.

The I-Jam really packs in the features and entertains the listener with all the bells and whistles one could ask for. At \$269, the price for all of this compact fun is steep — significantly higher than some of the other players on the market.

The Final Decision

This is a tough call. Both of these players offer useful and exciting features packed inside compact, attractive cases. In the end the I-JAM looks a lot cooler and has features not normally found on portable devices. **MHJ**

rating ★★★★★

JazPiper
\$199, Mediaforte
31-35-6422583
www.mediaforte.com.sg

Great price, well designed, good features, has internal storage

Instruction manual is poorly written

rating ★★★★★

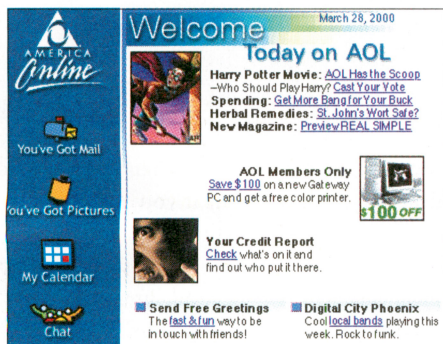
I-JAM
\$269, I-JAM Multimedia
888-326-4526
www.ijamworld.com

Great looks & features

Pricy, no internal storage

AOL 5.0

Without doubt, AOL is the king of the online world. A combination of clever marketing and a controlled, relatively family-safe environment, have combined to lift AOL from its humble beginnings to the leader of the online service industry. As with any leader, AOL must keep up with the latest technology and trends. Their latest release, AOL 5.0 is designed to match the features of the previously-released Windows version. But the new release is at best a minor update for Mac users.



Chief among the new features is a redesigned Welcome screen, with a vertical easy access bar that lets you move from one online information center (called channels) to another with a single mouse click. You can also create custom signatures for your email, complete with links to your favorite Website.

The My Places feature provides you links to five of your favorite AOL areas. The My Calendar feature is a Web page that serves as an online reminder service. The other interesting new feature is You've Got Pictures, which delivers digital copies of your pictures online, after you bring them into a local photo lab to develop.

And that's about it. The Web browser, based on Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.01, remains largely unchanged (despite

the release of Internet Explorer 5.0).

To its credit, AOL 5.0 launches faster, and is more stable. But the system requirements are hefty. The recommended setup is a G3 or G4 Mac, with 64MB of RAM. You can run it on a slower Power Macintosh, but your performance will suffer. This definitely seems a bit much for the novice users that AOL has traditionally catered to.

The Final Decision

If you're an AOL member, and your Mac can accept AOL 5.0's requirements you'll appreciate the improved performance and short-list of new features. But it should have been called version 4.1.

— Gene Steinberg

rating

Free with subscription
800-700-6340
www.aol.com
PowerPC required

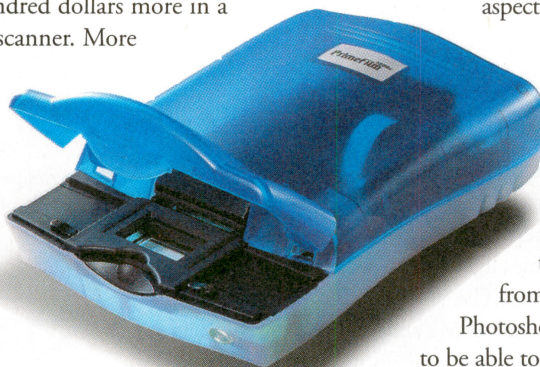
⬆ Faster, custom email signatures, online Calendar, and configurable Welcome screen

⬇ Significant memory and processor requirements, no support for older Macs

PrimeFilm 1800u Slide Scanner

If you want to scan slides, you can invest in an adapter for your regular scanner for as little as \$100, or you can invest a few hundred dollars more in a dedicated slide scanner. More expensive, yes, but these have their advantages — they hold the slide straight in a frame, for better accuracy, and they allow you to feed film through it in a single strip, to minimize futzng. The PrimeFilm 1800u, from Pacific Image Electronics, is a very affordable, USB slide scanner.

It's small, with a rounded, "self-con-



tained" design — lift up the front to install your slide, and when you close it up again, nothing troubles the surface of the unit except for a single, luminescent green button simply labeled Scan.

The PrimeFilm's software, dubbed CyberView, has some cumbersome aspects. When I tried

the Scan button it gave me a most unhelpful message: Exception Thrown. Calling up the software from within Adobe's Photoshop, I was relieved

to be able to scan without throwing a single exception. And the driver is well laid out, with a good set of features for tweaking your scans. But CyberView told me to quit Photoshop and open it up again in order to start a new scan, no matter how much memory I gave to Photoshop.

The scanner can capture very high resolution and does its work relatively quickly. Scanning a slide at 1,800 dpi (dots-per-inch) takes about one minute at its highest settings. Though scan quality was serviceable, they came out a bit washed out and fuzzy.

The Final Decision Though the PrimeFilm 1800u does not provide the sharpest scans around, and though it suffers from one or two irritating foibles, it still offers a handy way to scan large numbers of slides into USB Macs, and it's also on the inexpensive side compared to other dedicated slide scanners on the market.

— David Weiss

rating

\$299, Pacific Image Electronics
310-618-8100
www.scanace.com
USB Required

⬆ Small, well designed, one-touch scan button

⬇ Delivers unhelpful error messages, must quit and re-launch image-editing software for each scan, scans are a bit fuzzy and low in contrast

Katabounga

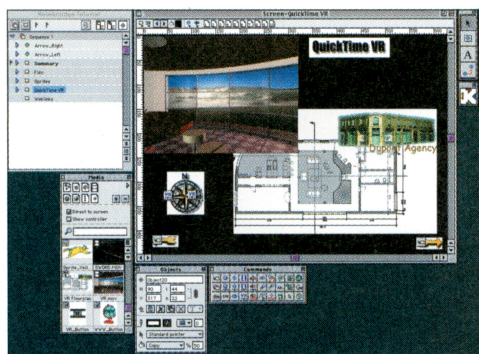
HyperCard used to be the easiest multimedia creation tool on the block. Unfortunately, it met an early demise. Enter Katabounga, an excellent multimedia authoring environment that be may even easier to use than HyperCard and that generates a far better finished product.

Katabounga is straightforward: You create a project — referred to in Katabounga lingo as a scenario — on a scene-by-scene basis. Into any scene you can add and arrange a variety of objects, from pictures and sounds to QuickTime movies. Commands are attached to any object on your screen and, when specific events take place with that object, these commands control what happens next. For example, if you have an arrow that, when clicked, you want to take your user to the next screen, you simply drag the Screen Navigation Command from the

command palette to the arrow, attaching the command to the object. You configure the command using a drop-down menu to move to the next screen when the arrow is clicked. Every Katabounga object is just as easy to manipulate.

Katabounga handles many media types including TIFF, Flash, MP3, QuickTime. When you're using QuickTime movies, Katabounga lets you manipulate the movie or have the movie manipulate your entire scenario on a frame-by-frame basis. The program does this by responding to messages that QuickTime sends out as each new frame is displayed.

Unfortunately, the program has a small downside: You'll only be able to view your



Katabounga creations using Katabounga's runtime module, and your projects cannot be ported to the Web. Fortunately, your runtime program can be distributed royalty-free.

The Final Decision Katabounga is a top-notch program that, while incredibly easy to use, doesn't sacrifice features or versatility to make the program accessible. Katabounga will have you creating amazing multimedia in no time.

— Jeff Battersby

rating ★★★★★

\$470, Abvent Inc.
415-431-3412
PowerPC Required
www.katabounga.com

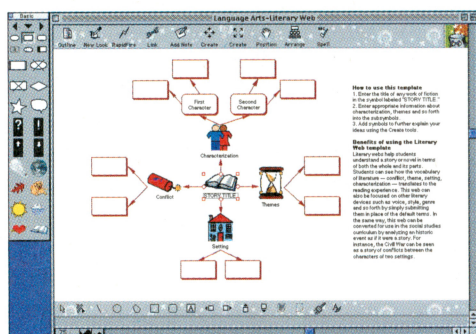
Easy to use and very versatile

Requires runtime application

Inspiration

You need to write a report for a school project, you want to organize your personal or business Website, you need to create a multimedia presentation to introduce a new product. When you need a way to develop and organize your thoughts clearly, you'll find Inspiration is a compelling method to map out your ideas, get the details in place, and then use that information to develop your material.

Inspiration helps you structure your thoughts in two ways. The first is the Diagramming mode, where you place



descriptive symbols representing your thoughts on a document page. This gives you a convenient overview of your ideas, making it easy to move them around to your liking. The other method is the

standard outline view, where your thoughts are organized in text form by topics, subtopics, and notes. You can switch between the two viewing methods without affecting the information in your outline.

If this whole process seems intimidating to learn, fear not. The manual has a well-written, carefully organized tutorial that takes about 35 minutes to complete. (I suspect they probably wrote it up using their own program.) There are also a number of handy templates that you can use to simplify the setup of your new outline.

Whether you use Mac or

Windows, you'll have pretty much the same program. This is the curse and the blessing, since such special Mac features as AppleScript and QuickTime, aren't supported. This is unfortunate, since one of the key features of the program is multimedia storyboarding. In addition, the quality of the Symbol Library graphics is less-than-stellar, though this is strictly a cosmetic problem.

The Final Decision Inspiration is a first-rate creative tool, offering a remarkable and efficient way to visualize and organize your ideas, regardless of the nature of your project. Just forgive the cheesy graphics and you will find a great deal to like about this useful program. At just \$69, it's a steal.

— Gene Steinberg

rating ★★★★★

\$69, Inspiration Software Inc.
800-877-4292
www.inspiration.com

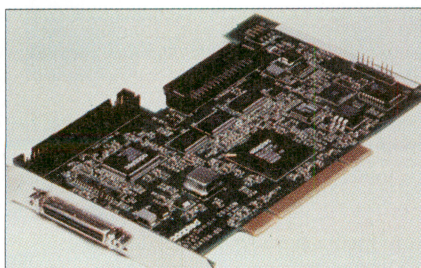
Easy to learn; powerful idea organizing features; great manual

Lacks support for Mac-specific features

Adaptec PowerDomain 29160N

SCSI cards — pronounced scuzzy — have been around a long time. You probably know them from certain older peripherals like scanners and hard drives. Recently they've been replaced on newer Macs by FireWire and USB devices. The latest generation of SCSI cards can improve both the performance and flexibility of your computer.

Why should you be compelled to install one of these pricey devices onto your computer? There are two reasons. The first is that it will allow you to attach your older peripherals to your



newer G3 and G4s. Secondly, with this latest generation of Ultra SCSI, your devices have the potential to run faster than they do with FireWire, and much faster than USB.

Installing the Ultra SCSI into my Mac G3 was quite simple. It took about ten minutes to plug in the card, and then another ten minutes to install and check the software. With this device Adaptec claims that under laboratory conditions the Ultra SCSI will transfer as much as 160 MB of data per second. What makes this device so fast is its ability to take a lot of data into its memory (cache) and when it has all this data it fires it through a proverbial pipeline at 160MB/sec., which is what they call its Burst Rate.

Our tests showed remarkable results of 34.7MB per-second with an external

hard drive, versus 53.2MB per-second, with a FireWire hard drive. The key to all of this speed is to have peripherals that can accept data at 160MB per-second. If they don't, then your Ultra-3 will be limited to the transfer rate of the peripheral. If you already have some high performance devices, this SCSI card is something you should definitely look into.

The Final Decision If you are encumbered by the slow transfer rates of your current SCSI, FireWire, or USB device, Ultra SCSI will certainly improve your computers' speed. The price is reasonable for those of you who already have high performance peripherals, but there are less expensive and slower models available from Adaptec.

— Ross Tibbits

rating	★★★★
\$349, Adaptec 800-442-7274 www.adaptec.com	
👍	Easy installation, speed and flexibility
👎	Speed depends on peripherals

VideoGenetics

VideoGenetics is a digital video enhancement package that aims to improve the picture quality of QuickTime video clips. This is achieved through adjustments in color balance, contrast, saturation, and gamma. The application aims to ease video enhancement for the novice user by presenting them with a series of proposed picture changes. The user examines each new iteration and then either accepts, partially accepts, or rejects the change. VideoGenetics continues to generate variation after variation, until the user decides the video picture has been optimally enhanced.

VideoGenetics can enhance an entire



movie at once, or at the user's discretion, optimize scenes individually. Enhancements, known as genotypes, can be layered. Several special effects genotypes are included (although they aren't much more than a novelty).

Unfortunately, the interface is clumsy and confusing. For example, it is not clear to a new user that you must continuously accept, partially accept, or reject a proposed change in order to see another iteration. Further, the variations seem aimless. The package would have done

well to ask the user what type of enhancement they'd like to apply to the picture. Although gamma, curve, and gradient are confusing terms, it is still puzzling that the application fails to show key variations in contrast, color, and saturation in an effort to both educate the user and gauge his preferences. It would

not have been difficult to provide simple controls such as darker, lighter, more color, less color, more contrast, and less contrast. Instead, VideoGenetics seems to randomly generate each new variation.

Of the three clips we fed VideoGenetics, only one of them showed marked improvement. The application handily improved low contrast clips, enhancing the dark tones and improving color saturation. High contrast clips, however, failed to show significant enhancement.

The Final Decision VideoGenetics has good intentions but is hampered by poor craftsmanship. Your money is better spent elsewhere until the program receives a much needed overhaul.

— Chris McVeigh

rating	★★
\$199, Q-Research 425-888-6609 PowerPC Required www.q-res.com	
👍	Admirably enhances footage
👎	Clumsy Interface, weak features

DiskWarrior

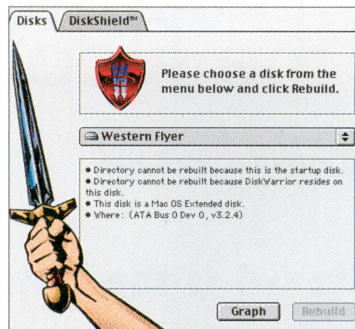
Silver bullet, utility belt, X-ray vision — there's no question that being a super hero requires some extraordinary tools. DiskWarrior is just such a tool, making it possible to repair hopelessly trashed hard drives and restore your files to their initial, wholesome state with the click of a button.

When I called Alsoft for a review copy of DiskWarrior 2, I requested to receive it "quickly" because I had a short deadline. My request was met with canny cynicism: "Are you having a disk problem now?" Apparently the reputation of DiskWarrior (and review writers) is sealed; DiskWarrior will repair the worst of hard disk problems with amazing ease. The program does this by focusing its efforts on your hard disk's directory structure — the map that details where information is stored on your hard drive — actually rebuilding and reorganizing it, rather than just patching over errors and corruption. And if the program does discover corrup-

tion in the directory structure it actually searches your hard drive to find the correct information, making it possible to restore your drive to a pristine state.

The added benefit of a rebuilt directory is speed gain. Using DiskWarrior, you should expect to see your programs and files open at least 33% faster.

Introduced in version 2 is a new feature called DiskShield, a system extension that monitors data as it is written to and read from the directory, ensuring that the information is valid and error-free. Unlike other "stealth" utilities — like Norton's CrashGuard — DiskShield is completely unnoticeable, only appearing if an actual problem arises. Alsoft now includes another disk utility on the CD, PlusOptimizer, which reorganizes the data stored on your



hard drive, maximizing how quickly your Mac will access data. This addition helps to round out the DiskWarrior feature-set. The program also includes a new graphing utility that allows you to see the current status of your disk's directory structure, helping you to determine whether you should optimize your drive or not.

The Final Decision DiskWarrior is a deceptively simple yet incredibly powerful disk repair utility, which is able to fix your disk problems with zero effort. We highly suggest that you make DiskWarrior the cornerstone of your Mac utility belt.

— Jeff Battersby

rating ★★★★★

\$70, Alsoft
800-257-6381
www.alfsoft.com

Powerful disk repair utility, new optimization features, pre-emptive protection extension

None significant



MiniView™ DP
 MODEL: G-CS12DP

Single console controlling 1 ADB Mac and 1 PC.

Product Function


 PS/2 Console


 PC


 Mac


 Model: G-CS12DP



MiniView™ USB
 MODEL: G-CS102U

Single console controlling 2 USB based computers. (Mac or PC)

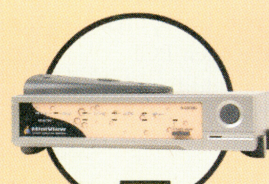
Product Function


 4 USB Peripherals


 1 Monitor


 Model: G-CS102U


 2 computers



MiniView™ USB
 MODEL: G-CS104U

Single console controlling 4 USB based computers. (Mac or PC)

Product Function


 4 USB Peripherals


 1 Monitor


 Model: G-CS104U


 4 computers

For more information, email: sales@iogear.com or call our toll-free number: (888) 999-2836. Customers outside the U.S. can contact us at (949) 250-1260. Web-site: www.iogear.com/machome

MiniView™
 USB KVM CONNECTIVITY



Control Macs and PCs with a single mouse, keyboard and monitor!





3 YEAR WARRANTY



Introducing three milestones in our quest to bring Macs and PCs together - the ADB & USB KVM switches. While our Dual Platform MiniView (G-CS12DP) is perfect for older Mac configurations, our two and four-port USB KVM switches allow four USB devices and a monitor to be shared among two or four computers. And because these switches are USB-based, Macs, PCs and any other USB-compatible systems can share the same peripherals. Visit us on the web at www.iogear.com/machome to see how we can put these revolutionary new switches to work for you.



G4 to the Floor

Taking the Fastest Mac for a Spin

The 500MHz G4 is the fastest, most full-featured of the G4 line, and therefore, the fastest and most full-featured Mac as of press time, period. At \$3,499, it's also the most expensive, but it promises to forever banish the bane of our existence — the progress bar.

The Basics

The G4 is highly expandable, and thanks to its innovative Door feature it's a cinch to pop in a modem or another hard drive. It even has an internal FireWire connector, so you can easily pop in a FireWire drive. It's got a beefy, 27GB hard drive, which is certainly enough elbowroom to handle tons of graphics and video files. It's also souped up with a mighty 256MB of RAM, expandable to 1.5GB. It comes with a built-in 100MB Zip drive, which is a nice touch.

For connectivity, it's got: Ethernet, two USB ports, and two FireWire ports. There are three open PCI slots, which is plenty if you want to add additional expansion cards.

The G4 Factor

From a purely subjective perspective, using this Mac is a zippy experience. Windows pop open with nary a fuss, programs start up quickly, and large files get saved onto the hard disk with a brisk, fierce, alacrity. And Norton's

System Info reports that it's noticeably faster than the G3 PowerBook running at the same processor speed. In fact, the 500MHz G4 is supposed to be a lot faster than a 500MHz G3. This is due to a particular section of the G4 processor that Apple calls, dramatically enough, the Velocity Engine. But in order for your programs to take advantage of the Velocity Engine, the software has to be specifically written to take advantage of it. In the case of Adobe Photoshop 5.5, you need to download a special plug-in in order for the G4 to really strut its stuff, but it's a bit more complicated than that. Even with the plug-in installed, you won't notice the "G4 Factor" with every single thing you do in Photoshop.



Video

With 16MB of video memory, and a RAGE 128 graphics card, you can move large, 1,800 dpi images around on the screen as easily as you can wave your hand in the air. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the *Unreal Tournament* tests —

this graphics-intensive game danced to the tune of

about 50 frames per-second on the G4, compared to about 30 on an iMac DV. You'll also be able to take advantage of the G4's video power if you decide to turn your G4 into a home theater — it comes with a DVD drive as well.

The Final Decision There's no doubt that the G4/500 is the fastest, best equipped Mac, and within the applications that are optimized for it, for specific operations that take best advantage of the G4's Velocity Engine, performance is nothing short of phenomenal. If you're a professional graphic designer who uses Photoshop 5.5 on a daily basis, this is the machine for you. But if you're not necessarily going to process huge numbers of graphics files, then you won't be able to appreciate the G4 difference. In that case, a used blue and white G3, or a new one if you can still find one, might be the best deal. **MHJ**

By David Weiss

rating



Power Macintosh G4/500
\$3,499, Apple Computer
800-538-9696
www.apple.com

👍 Wicked fast, good expandability, excellent video, has Zip drive

🗨 Expensive, only faster than a G3 with specific operations in specific programs

The Works

A Look at AppleWorks 6

AppleWorks (formerly ClarisWorks) has long been the tool of the Macintosh masses: a powerful yet easy-to-use collection of integrated applications. Version 6, which is a major revision to the program, adds a new look, a multitude of new features — including integration with the Internet — and an excellent new Presentation module.

Change is Good

The AppleWorks interface has undergone a complete overhaul, borrowing features from AppleWorks for Kids and adding a few tricks of its own to round the program out. AppleWorks 6 has taken on a softer look, similar to what you'll soon see in OS X. The icons used for tools and buttons are larger and easier to see and can be adjusted, via the Preferences panel, to suit your specific needs. The buttons on the button bar can be arranged and rearranged simply by dragging them to a new position on the bar. AppleWorks' second major change is its Starting Points menu. Starting Points is a tabbed, customizable window that appears as soon as the program is

By Jeff Battersby

opened and is used to begin any new project. The program comes with five initial tabs: Basic, for creating blank documents; Assistants, for step-by-step document creation; Recent Items, which lists what you've recently worked on; Templates, collections of professionally designed documents; and Web, AppleWorks templates you can download from the Web. You can also add tabs of your own to organize your personal templates into groupings that make sense to you.

Finally, AppleWorks has added an Auto-save option — a feature that has long been missing from the program. Also, (and you may not have known this about your current version of AppleWorks), you can password-protect any AppleWorks document you create: useful for keeping prying eyes from looking where they shouldn't. But the program's most significant new feature is its frame editor. For those of you who have spent myriad hours creating frames using the typically clunky Spreadsheet tool, rejoice! The new Frame Tool, which allows you to drag a new frame onto the page and then adjust each cell with amaz-

ing ease, far outclasses a similar tool available in the much more expensive Microsoft Word.

Innovation is Better

Two new AppleWorks features serve to make this program very compelling, whether you're looking to make a new purchase or if you simply need to upgrade an older version. First is the program's new Web integration. In earlier versions of AppleWorks you were stuck with rather weak collections of clip-art images and documents templates. At first blush, you might believe that the same is true of this latest version, until you select the Web tab in the Starting Points window or the Search tab in the Clippings window — an AppleWorks utility for collecting images and text. Upon selecting either of these you'll discover that you have access to over 100 new templates and over 25,000 pieces of high-quality clip art. The second major new feature is the program's Presentation module. Borrowing features from the now-defunct Claris Impact and adding a few new features of its own, AppleWorks now has a Presentation module that is more than suitable for the majority of users.

AppleWorks' downside is twofold: there is zero support for importing Microsoft Word documents — a glaring omission in this day and age — and a manual so sparse it's useless.

The Final Decision AppleWorks 6 has many new and worthwhile features. Go out and grab yourself a copy today. **MJ**

rating ★★★★★

\$79, Apple Computer
800-692-7753
www.apple.com
PowerPC required



Excellent new features, better user-interface, powerful new presentation tool, incredibly low price

No support for MS Word documents, thinnest manual yet

Body Background

Creating Original Wallpaper for Your Website

One of the slickest innovations of HTML (HyperText Markup Language), the text-based code that lets your Web browser display text, images, and hyperlinks, is its ability to display images as backdrops to your Web pages.

Up until now, you may have spent many hours browsing hundreds of Websites, where thousands of Web page backgrounds can be found for download from generous souls who share their creations for free. That's what many Web designers do: that is, until they start wondering how to create uniquely beautiful or abstract background canvases like the ones on their favorite Web pages.

You may be thinking that because you're not an artist, you don't have the talent to create one of those gorgeous backgrounds, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, making background images for your Website can be easy and fun. Once you get started, you may find it difficult to stop.

Tiling Technique

The secret behind Web page backgrounds is that they are not really huge canvases at all, but rather small images called tiles, which typically measure just a square inch or

two, and repeat endlessly across your browser window. Such tiles are also referred to as background tiles, patterned tiles, or simply tiles. But no matter what you call them, when you use the `<body background>` tag, which actually places the Background tag inside the Body tag, or tell your Web authoring program to place a background image, the HTML code basically tricks the browser into displaying what looks like a wall-to-wall image containing the pattern of the tile. You only have to create one image.

This means that whatever the size of your screen or browser window opening, the image specified in the Body Background tag will repeat endlessly. Thus, the background pattern should be very small, tightly compressed, and quick to download, while the HTML code takes care of the tiling action. Once you have your beautiful background in place, you can layer text, transparent art, photographs, and other elements on top of it to create a unique effect.



A background made up of seamless tiles.

Don't get put off by the words "HTML tag." You don't even have to know this tag or any HTML. If you're using a Web authoring program such as Adobe PageMill, Macromedia Dreamweaver, Symantec Visual Page, Adobe GoLive, or any other package, applying a background image tile can be as easy as a couple of mouse clicks.

There are two kinds of tiles: seamed and seamless. Seamed tiles have an obvious border that will appear numerous times across your browser window. When an image has obvious borders, it will look tiled on purpose, and there is something to be said for this visual style, depending on how you want to display the contents of your page. If there is no obvious border, and your tile has images that simply repeat or appear randomly, then, as the image tiles across the page, it will be seamless.

When you create any image for the Web, you'll save it in compressed format either as a GIF or a JPEG. GIF stands for Graphic Interchange Format, which compresses images without losing information, but can hold only 256

By Jackie Dove

colors. JPEG, which stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group, can hold millions of colors, but will lose information on compression. Which one you choose depends on the nature of your pattern. If your image contains continuous tones, gradients, or drop shadows, it's best to save it as a JPEG. If you have a graphic with lots of areas of flat color, or just a few distinct colors, then saving it as a GIF may be a better option.

While the GIF format lets you interlace, which is a process that allows an image to download gradually in several passes, do not interlace background images, as that will be very annoying to your viewers.

Creating an Image

Creating a tiled background from scratch takes a bit of skill with a graphics program. In this example, we'll use Adobe Photoshop 5.5, but you can create tiled images in MetaCreations Painter, Adobe ImageReady (now part of Photoshop 5.5), and Photoshop 5.0 LE. We are partial to Photoshop 5.5 because of its flexibility and its Save for Web feature that makes a snap out of optimizing Web graphics.

HTML does not dictate how big your image should be, but it makes sense to keep your tile as small as possible. The size of the tile dictates how many times the image will repeat across your browser window. Keep in mind that just because an image repeats a certain number of times on your own screen, it will not necessarily be the same on other screens.

While it's best to work with a smaller tile, a larger one can still give you a small file size with a fast download rate. That's because download rates depend not only on dimension, but also on the complexity of your image, mode of

compression, and the number of colors you're using.

Think Offset

Photoshop's Offset filter — found under Filter, Other, Offset — helps you create seamless tiles by repositioning your graphic within the boundaries of the tile. The Offset filter can move any image according to a specified pixel value, letting you view and fill empty areas of the tile. With the Wrap Around command, if part of your image gets cut off on one end of the tile, it appears on the other end.

There are several ways to make background images. If you are creating your own abstract images, you can use Photoshop's pencil and paintbrush tools.

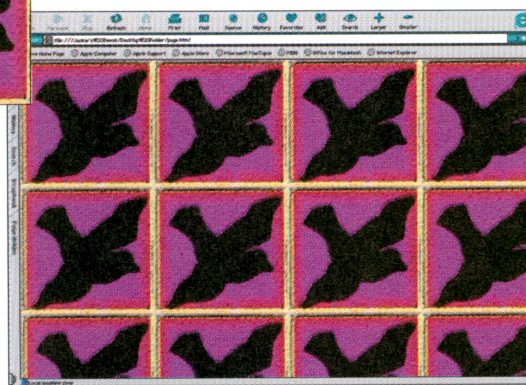
However, you may also want to use clip art that you can customize, or ornamental fonts from which you can construct creative patterns.

Since many clip art images are sim-



Musical Tiles This tile is an arrangement of six individual clip art images. In order to layer type over this background, lower the opacity of the images to make them lighter.

ple black-and-white bitmaps made up of black and white pixels, you may have to use Photoshop to convert them into RGB (Red, Green, Blue) mode first so that you can color and otherwise manipulate them. To transform bitmapped graphics into RGB, you'll have to convert them to grayscale first,



This is what the single tile looks like when placed in the <body background> tag within an HTML document. See how this seamed pattern repeats endlessly. You can also use a couple of mouse clicks to place such an image in any Web authoring program without knowing HTML.

and then to RGB, using the Image, Mode, Grayscale command. That will make Photoshop's Filters and other tools available to you.

Do all of your editing, cropping, and coloring in RGB mode. Then, when you're happy with your background tile, compress it for the Web with Photoshop's Save for Web option. (If you have an earlier edition of Photoshop or Photoshop LE, see sidebar for how to optimize your background tile for the Web.)

So let's get started

1. Open a Photoshop file and create 200-pixel x 200-pixel square (or any size you want, but keep it fairly small so it will download quickly) at 72 dots per inch.
2. Use the draw or paint tool to create abstract shapes. You can also use small pieces of clip art. Combine as many objects as you want that fit into your tile.
3. Arrange the objects or shapes so that they are concentrated in one section of the square.
4. Use the Offset filter, which is located under Filter, Other, Offset, to move the images that you've drawn and look for the obvious holes created by the filter.
5. When using the Offset filter, it is really a matter of judgment exactly how many pixels to offset, so this will take some experimentation. For example, you can try a 25 horizontal and a 25 vertical offset to start. Click the Wrap Around button.
6. Use the Offset filter several times in succession and fill in the obvious gaps in

your pattern each time you apply it. That will help make your final tile look seamless. An alternative is to simply arrange images in a pleasing pattern without using the Offset filter.

7. You can see what your pattern looks like directly in the browser or you can simulate the browser window in Photoshop. In Photoshop, with your image file open, choose Select All and Define Pattern under the Edit menu.

8. Create a new document that simulates the size of the browser window opening, say 640 x 480 pixels.

9. Under Edit, choose Fill, then select Pattern from the Use pop-up menu. That simulates the repeating pattern without your having to optimize the file for the Web. If you

loads by manipulating another HTML tag called <body bgcolor>, which determines the background color of your Web page. The background color, unlike the image tile, is pure HTML, so it takes no time to load. You have a choice of 216 Web-safe colors to choose from that will appear the same across all platforms and browser versions. Try to match the background color with the major color of the background image (or at least match light with light and dark with dark) so that viewers won't be hit with the default gray or white as the background downloads.

When creating a background, take into account the overall design of your site. Are you using light type or dark type? Will the pictures be big or

small, or busy? Will you be using illustrations, animations, transparencies, or photographs? Watch out for Website backgrounds that clash with text, because it will be unreadable and highly annoying.

You can manipulate your image in Photoshop

to increase the brightness, lower the contrast, or lower the opacity of your clip art images so they do not clash with your text or other images.

Make sure there's enough contrast between your page elements and the background. When you're using a light background, use dark type; when you're using a dark background, use light type.

Save your viewers time by using the same background image for a series of pages on your site. After the image has been loaded for the first page, each subsequent page will use the image stored in the browser cache (another word for memory), which will allow it to be viewed much more quickly.

Creating your own unique background tiles will add a burst of creativity and panache to your Website that mere clip art rarely achieves. **MLJ**

did you know...

When you create a Web page background, it will download before your text and images. This means you should **keep your background tiles small** and swift to download. Don't make your viewers wait.

don't like the pattern, now is your chance to revise or redo it.

10. When you're completely satisfied with your background tile, use Photoshop's Save for Web 4-up feature. That will give you several optimized versions of your background tile, letting you adjust for download speed and visual aesthetics.

Integrating Backgrounds

There are a few crucial factors to be aware of when placing backgrounds in your Web page. Because the browser first downloads the background before the text and images, a large background image will keep your reader from seeing any content until the background downloads. It's best to keep your tile small and tightly optimized.

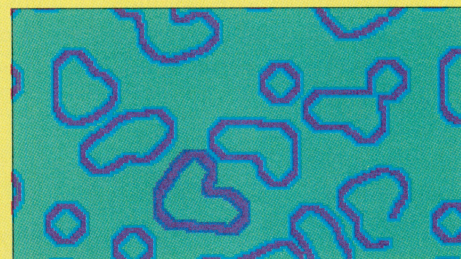
You can prevent unsightly down-

Backgrounds in Photoshop LE

If you do not have Photoshop 5.5 with its handy Save for Web or Define Pattern features, we suggest that you upgrade, because creating background image tiles for the Web will be much easier. However, you still can make gorgeous tiles with Photoshop LE.

The steps are the same except for the Define Pattern, and Save for Web features, so get ready to make some adjustments.

After you have applied your Offset filter or arranged your clip art, you'll want to test your tile in the browser, and that means compressing your image by hand into either a GIF or a JPEG. You would save most graphic art as a GIF, but if you are using a photograph, gradi-



Crack down the size of your images in Photoshop to figure out the lowest file size you can use. This tile has only six colors and is best saved as a GIF using the Exact Palette.

ent, shadow, or an image that has continuous tones, choose JPEG as the file format. That loss of quality will likely be unnoticeable if you are using the image as a background.

You can also save your background tile as a GIF. Under Image, Mode, choose Index Color, which later will give you the choice of saving your tile as a GIF. Under Indexed Color, Photoshop gives you a range of palettes and color depths from 8-bit (256 colors), down to 3-bit (eight colors). One favorite is the Adaptive palette, which draws from the colors in the image. You might also try the Exact palette if your image has just a few colors. Test various bit depths to see how low you can go while maintaining acceptable image quality.

When you're satisfied that the image looks good, then save it as a GIF or JPEG and test it in your Web browser by actually creating a test page either by hand or with your Web authoring tool.

Magellan's Travel Supplies

The basics of travel supplies, all online.

By Molly Wood

Magellan's brings new meaning to the term one-stop shopping. The Magellan Website has great sales on everything from travel clothing, luggage, and more. Travel supplies for sale are organized into categories such as packing and preparation, hotel supplies, "while you're there" supplies such as day bags, translators, or walking aids, and outdoor gear. There are also such goodies as motion sickness prevention tips, personal hygiene products, and even toilet kits. Magellan definitely has the most complete array of options we found.

www.magellans.com



Get Some Gear. Hit The Road.

Go places! That's the theme of this month's look at some of our favorite e-commerce destinations. Since we're looking at travel, we thought we'd poke around for some of the best sites to find travel accessories and the like. You'll find sporting goods, outfitters, map-makers, budget travel books, and even freeze-dried food! Who ever said we didn't treat you right?

Let's Go

Let's Go is the world's best-selling budget-travel

series, and now they've got a Website, too. The site links to features articles, a forum where questions about budget traveling are answered, and, of course, links to let you purchase the Let's Go guidebooks. The books are



written entirely by students and offer tips for getting the most out of your travels at the cheapest price. Check out the site's Thumb section for stories, contests, and travel photos.

www.letsgo.com

Rand McNally Travel Store

Not surprisingly, those marvels of map-dom, Rand McNally, also have a travel store where you can get all the goodies you'll need for a really great trip. The entire Website is designed to let you plan the trip from start to finish. But on the e-commerce side, the travel store allows you to shop by destination or department. Departments include travel maps and guidebooks, software and electronics, travel accessories, luggage, wall maps, games, and gifts, among other things. Shop by destination, and the site suggests the best guidebooks and maps for your trip. Handy!

www.randmcnally.com



Eastern Mountain Sports

A shopping site for all kinds of outdoor equipment. Eastern Mountain Sports is the ultimate destination for your rugged, hardy, outdoor-adventure type — or at least a wanna-be with a lot of cash to spare. Rest

assured, pocket-conscious:

Eastern Mountain has

some pretty beefy sales, too, plus gear ranging from biking equipment, apparel, racks, and waterskiing stuff to footwear, and the always intriguing eco-challenge gear. This site also offers an adventure checklist, so you can make sure you're as prepared as an Eagle Scout; an Exploration 'Zine, with stories and photos from all sorts of fabulous travels; links to stores, clinics, and careers; and a climbing school section that lets you find classes near you. An extremely complete adventure site!

www.emsonline.com



WITH
ORDINARY
PRINTERS,
YOU SEE THE
PEOPLE ARE
SUNBATHING.

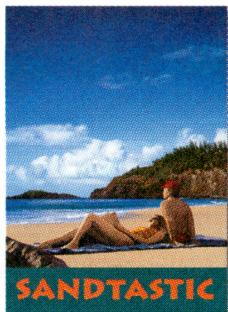
WITH OUR
PRINTERS,
YOU SEE
THE PEOPLE
ARE SAND
SCULPTURES.



YOU'VE GOT TO SEE IT IN

EPSON

COLOR.



It's true. The couple enjoying the sand is actually made from it. As are their clothes, glasses and book. Even the blanket they're lying on. It's all sand. Meticulously sculpted, painted and photographed to fool the eye. So when the artists who created this difficult illusion wanted to reproduce it for a brochure, there was only one printer they could trust with the job. An Epson. As you can see here, it captured not just the vibrant color of the setting but also the incredible detail in the sculptures. And turned what could have been a nightmare of a project into a day at the beach.

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Price may vary. Up to 12 PPM black/10 PPM color with the EPSON Stylus Color 900. Epson, EPSON Stylus and Micro Piezo are trademarks/registered trademarks of Seiko Epson Corp. PerfectPicture is a registered trademark of Epson America, Inc. ©2000 Epson America, Inc.

Eat Rations

For fanatics only! Here, you can treat yourself to the warm, fuzzy yumminess that is MILSPEC, the civilian food ration. The rations are the civilian

version of the MRE rations the military uses, and according to this site, they're tasty, too! The rations consist of a complete, ready-to-eat meal sealed in a large pouch, and come in menu items including parmesan chicken, beef stew, pasta dishes, and more.

Perhaps best of all, eatrations.com offers emergency tips (mostly related to MILSPEC), recreation information, and outdoor travel links. www.eatrations.com



The Passport People

Is there anything more painful and irritating than getting a passport? Well, this Website, in a fit of sheer genius, does it for you. Only nine states, after all, have passport offices. But the Passport People can help you get your passport quickly, as long as you have all the proper documentation. If necessary, the Passport People say they can actually get your passport for you in only 24 hours. They can also get birth certificates and visas. Be aware, however, we haven't actually tested this one, passport-wise, but it comes recommended by various travel sites. As with any Website, try it at your own risk.

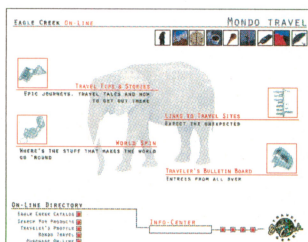
www.passportpeople.com

Eagle Creek On-Line

You've seen the catalog, now see the Website.

Eagle Creek On-Line, despite its pale interface, offers all kinds of Eddie Bauer-style gear, travel tips and stories, travel sites, and products. The Eagle Creek site lets you create a personal traveler's profile, so it can electronically generate the most appropriate (read: expensive) gear for the trip. There's also a traveler's checklist, and a "custom packing system." The site also links to a "Mondo Travel" page, wherein the explorer can find tips and stories, links to travel sites, a traveler's bulletin board, and links to hip world happenings. A very sophisticated experience.

www.passportpeople.com



Sports Basement

Closeout sporting goods for the outdoorsy type! If

you're off on a trip and need just the right duds, check out this Website. It offers mostly apparel at extremely low prices — we found a Helly Hansen sailing jacket for just \$50 — and with free ground

shipping, which alone makes it worth ordering from. They've got what they call a "hard-to-find" warehouse in San Francisco, for those of you who live in the Bay Area (or are

just visiting!), but you can, of course, buy online. The Sports Basement offers brand-name gear at 30-60% discounts.

www.sportsbasement.com



Respond.com

A fairly unique shopping idea.

At respond.com, you submit a request for what you're looking for — including, of course, travel gear. You submit the request in your own words, and it gets forwarded to the "appropriate sellers." They'll then send you spam, er, I mean, personalized responses via your email address, and you contact the appropriate sellers to purchase the goods you want. The site offers all sorts of categories, including travel (see, we're sticking with the theme, dang it!), but check it out for all your shopping needs.

www.respond.com

SHOPPING BY REQUEST

Respond.com

hot spot...

Last and least-expensive, look to Travelscape for airfare and hotel reservations at cutrate prices. Travelscape has daily hot deals, such as tickets to New York for \$179, or a stay at the Sheraton in Washington D.C. for \$62. The site has a flight tracker, featured destination, travel guides, and, let me just reiterate, really great deals.

www.travelscape.com

Apple Learning Interchange

A Highlight Website for Educators (Parents Can Visit, Too!)

The job of the classroom teacher is often a lonely one. Communication between colleagues is unfortunately limited by the design of the typical school building and schedule, not to mention the daily responsibilities and routine.

Today's technologies can reduce a teacher's isolation, and can also help teaching and learning within the classroom environment. Still, even as such advances lift barriers between educators, many teachers still need guidance and direction when it comes to using that technology.

One resource that's creating excitement among a growing population of educators is Apple Computer's Website, the Apple Learning Interchange, or ALI (<http://ali.apple.com>). The learning interchange is a dynamic online community where educators from kindergarten

through college can share, learn, and communicate. The Website is also a veritable cornucopia of information, ideas

and instructional material for teaching, learning, research, and collaboration.

One of its best features is an ever-expanding repository of Units of Practice (UOP), which are sets of core teaching components. They include a foundation, a descriptive title, a list of all the subject areas, and all the learning levels to which the unit applies, the name(s) of the author(s) of the unit, and a brief summary.

The Units of Practice framework is highly structured, and was developed jointly by Apple Computer, Inc., the National Science Foundation, and the New American Schools Development Corporation. Each unit is submitted by an experienced teacher, complies with appropriate state and/or national standards, and explains how best to integrate technology into the teaching and learning processes. The units include complete definitions, links to pertinent information, and standards that make it easy for teachers to evaluate each one for classroom use and change it as needed.

ALI members and visitors to the Website can search for one of these lesson plans by subject, by level, or both. Best

of all, and a new feature of ALI, is that a search for a Unit of Practice can include state and national standards along with subject/grade combinations and topics.

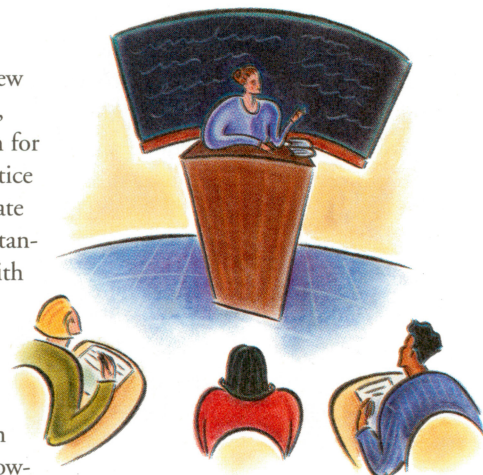
The units are currently in sync with a growing number of local, state, and national standards. Thirty-two states plus the District of Columbia and six public school districts were either available or introduced in mid-April. Other states will be added as resources become available. The units are also correlated to national standards for mathematics, social studies and science when applicable, and with the National Educational Technology Standards for Students. The units are flexible, too — each can be converted to meet any teacher's state or district standards.

A Complete Package

The ALI site is not just about Units of Practice. Other valuable resources for the educators include QuickTime TV for Learning; Collaboration; Apple Learning Professional Development; and the Apple Learning Series.

Of these, QuickTime TV for Learning is quickly becoming popular. It features streaming video Webcasts on a variety of topics of interest to educators and students.

Recent Webcasts included such diverse topics as the



By Cathy Parise

Dead Sea Scrolls, a presentation for 9th through 12th grade students created by the Chicago Field Museum and Ball State University, and a presentation on the Mars Polar Lander. Professional development events that have, in the past, drawn only those who could link up to a satellite are also now available by Webcast via QuickTime TV, and educators are taking note.

More than two dozen events were Webcast during the 1999-2000 school year alone, and there is incredible potential for the archives to grow.

The Collaboration section of ALI contains a selection of forums in which an educator can connect and collaborate with colleagues on topics of specific interest. It is divided into three strands: K-12, Special Interests, and Higher Education. K-12 currently has five forum sections, two of which are the Science Lab and the Language Arts Round Table. Tech Talk is one of three Special Interests sections, and Best Practices in New Media Education is one of three Higher Education sections. The forum sections will undoubtedly expand as ALI members initiate new interests.

The ALI tools aren't limited to just the Web. ALI also features the Apple Learning Series, which is a collection of kits containing software and student projects that have also been correlated to selected state and national standards.

All the software in the Apple Learning Series (ALS) has been evaluated by educators and has received top marks. With student projects, step-by-step instructions, and extensive online resources included in the kit, an educator can feel confident in receiving a product that will stimulate and encourage students in collaborative learning and problem solving. For all those who have already discovered and made use of these kits, surprise! Nine new kits became available in April. These include Teacher Productivity, K-3 Curriculum, 3-6 Curriculum, Secondary Math and Science, Secondary Language Arts and Social Studies, K-6 Web Publishing, Secondary Web Publishing, and K-6 Multimedia and Secondary Multimedia.

Apple Learning Professional Development offers educators both trainer-

led as well as online courses and workshops, consulting services, and planning products all at very reasonable prices. The online courses are particularly appealing and are a great solution for busy teachers. Online courses are self-paced and designed to help the teacher learn to effectively integrate technology into their activi-

ties. Each online course is composed of an interactive tutorial, a hands-on project, and a forum of ongoing discussions between the course mentor and other educators enrolled in the course. Online courses cover topics as basic as an Introduction to iMac and AppleWorks 101, as intermediate as Internet in the Classroom, and as advanced as Multimedia in the Classroom and Advanced Hyperstudio.

Check out the classroom resources, too, which can help a teacher create more excitement and interest. They include an Almanac containing events that happened on a particular date in history; Fun Facts that change daily and provide both teachers and students with interesting information about a topic that may be relevant to the date, the season, or an event; a Word of the Day that may also be related to a holiday, event, or date; Words of Wisdom which are usually quotes by famous (or infamous) people; a Discussion Starter that provides an interesting topic and follow-up information on topics that change regularly; a Classroom Tip about ways or ideas for teachers to spark student interest; and a

The Apple Learning Interchange offers teaching plans, educational Webcasts, and a place where educators can interact with their peers.

Technology Tip that could be a way to use technology or the meaning of a technical term.

Go There!

So, educators, check it out! Apple is here to help, whether it's a search of the UOPs for your grade level or subject, using some of the Classroom Tips or Technology Tips to give that little spark to the day, making the Almanac or Word of the Day an on-going mini-lesson to expand your students' vocabulary and knowledge of world events, or taking advantage of live Webcasts to add the excitement of real-time learning opportunities for your students. Give yourself the reward of learning something new in one of the professional development offerings or get online and connect with other colleagues in a forum on a topic that piques your interest. The opportunities available are expanding daily. The Apple Learning Interchange is a value-added site that is well worth the cost of membership for any educator, especially since the cost of membership is free! **MHJ**

Cathy Parise has a Master's in Curriculum & Instruction and is working toward a doctorate. She holds degrees in drama, speech, and English, and is a certified educator. She has been a professional educator, a consultant, and currently supervises Educational Technology for the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Olympia, Washington.

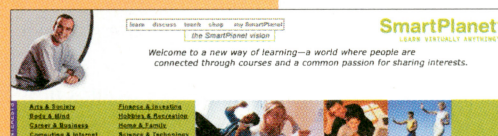
Better Thyself

Speaking of self-improvement, further

education can be had at SmartPlanet, recently relaunched with a new look and better features. The site offers self-taught and instructor-led courses to people of all ages. Take classes in such categories as arts and society, body and mind, computing and the Internet, finance and investing, and science and technology. Courses

include such titles as "Trigonometry for the Layman," "Intro to 401k's," and "Developing a Good Idea for a Screenplay." Some courses are free but most others cost about \$30. The classes involve discussion boards and feedback, and SmartPlanet calls the interactive style "e-learning." Become a member for \$16 a month or \$90 a year, and you can create and teach your own courses. Or, join as a member for free and just take the classes, participate in discussion boards, or buy books and study materials to complement your learning.

www.smartplanet.com



It's Going to be Huge...No, Wait...Humongous!

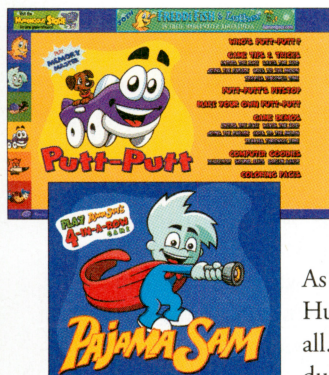
The godfathers of cute kid stuff at Humongous Entertainment have kicked out some more adorable, certain-to-please cartoon games for tots. As many as eight new releases will keep your pups entertained all summer long. Titles that came out this spring include *Pajama Sam 3: You Are What You Eat From Your Head to Your Feet*, an interactive look at nutrition that was available in April, and *Putt-Putt Joins the Circus*, available in June, in which that all-too-cute little car, Putt-Putt, has to save the circus. Humongous also has a new title in its kids-only sports series, *Backyard Baseball 2001*. The game

includes junior versions of professional Major League Baseball stars, similar to *Backyard Football* (4 apples, Feb., 2000), and was available in May.

As usual with Humongous, that's not all. Available in July, a line of education titles dubbed One-Stop Fun Shop will let the kiddies design, direct, and print their own creations. The

titles will feature the perennial Humongous Entertainment characters, including Putt-Putt, Freddi Fish, and Pajama Sam. Later in the summer, look for two new titles in the Blue's Clues series (based on the Nickelodeon program), *Blue's Reading Time Activities* and *Blue's Art Time Activities*.

Humongous Entertainment, 800-499-8386, www.humongous.com



Idioms For Dummies

Every common expression has its origin somewhere, but haven't you wondered where? The answer lies on the Web, of course! Randomhouse.com introduces its Word of the Day site, where self-betterment takes a trivia turn. Randomhouse has a cadre of lexicology mavens (i.e. a group of word-history know-it-alls) who research the origins of phrases, slang, and even odd words and explain them. The site is a must-visit for wordsmiths, at the very least. You've got to understand your language in order to use it well. Think of it as training for when you end up on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire."

www.randomhouse.com/word

Back To School

Missing those high school days?

Sure, I knew you were. Well, now you can find your old classmates (for free) at www.highschoolalumni.com. Just search for your school by state, city, then school, and you can view a list of any of your classmates who have already signed up. Once you sign up, you can include your name, age, email address, and all kinds of current contact information, as well as a brief description of all the exciting things you've been doing since you graduated. You know — how you've gone to skydiving school, spent two years in Naples teaching English to underprivileged children, and written all the Volkswagen ads since becoming a PR intern last year. The basics. The site includes more than 22,000 high schools throughout the U.S., so that virtually any alumni of an American high school can find old classmates, or let them find you! Schools themselves can update the site and add students as well.

www.highschoolalumni.com

Anakin's Speedway

You may recall that the last time Lucas Arts released a *Star Wars: Episode I*-inspired podracing game, it looked really great, and was fun for about half an hour (*Star Wars: Episode I: Pod Racer*, 3 apples, March, 2000). Well, Lucas Learning, a division of Lucas Arts, has handed down a second podracing offering — a problem-solving title for kids age four and up. Unfortunately, it has many of the same foibles.

With *Star Wars: Anakin's Speedway*, kids are treated to customizable podracing tracks, narration by Jake Lloyd, who played Anakin Skywalker in Episode I, gorgeous animation, and great sound effects. The game, of course, has completely legit *Star Wars* credentials. The theme music alone makes it a goose-bump inducing buy, and the animation is bright, cheerful, and clever.

Unfortunately, once you stop wandering around enjoying the scenery, there simply isn't much substance to *Anakin's Speedway*.

The game lets children choose from four podracing pilots, including Anakin and the dastardly Sebulba, as well as the four-armed Gsgano and clumsy Ben Quadinaros. From there, you can create your own podracing track on one of three planets. As you scroll over different sections of the track, you can click to add loop-de-loops, hairpin curves, ramps, and missing sections you must jump over. There are six track areas and 28 track pieces on each planet, each with its own animation and sound. Once the track is built, it's off to the races — sort of.

The game purports to teach problem-solving skills — not all the track pieces match up, so building can be a bit of a puzzle. Then there's the matter of figuring out how to negotiate the track without crashing, which the game's developers say teaches children about concepts such as motion and forces.

Unfortunately, *Anakin's Speedway* isn't terribly interactive — children don't steer the podracers, they merely control their speed by clicking on dashboard controls. The controls speed, slow or stop the podracer, or let you make a pit stop for more fuel. Once the problems of speed and crashing are solved, it's

just a matter of circling the track ad nauseum. In addition, there is no way to customize, play with, or even really view the actual podracers, which are such groovy little creations that it would behoove this game to take a closer look at them.

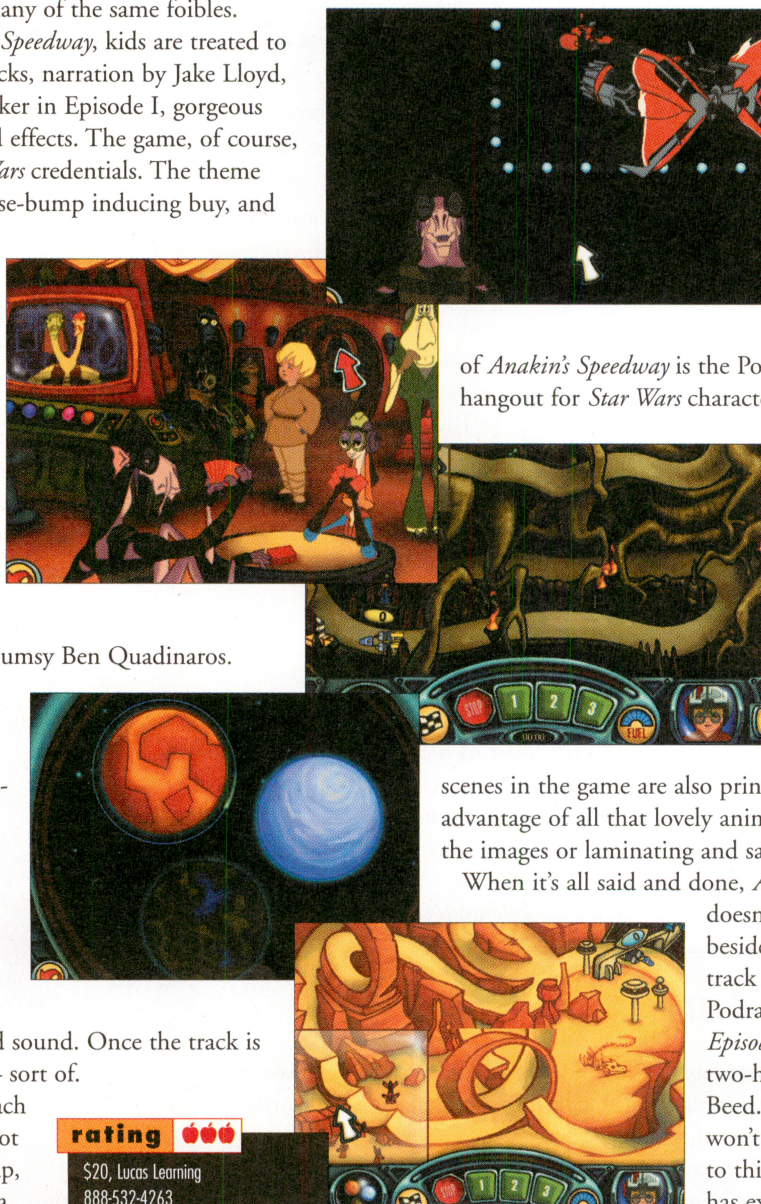
Possibly the best part of *Anakin's Speedway* is the Podracer's Hut, an animated hangout for *Star Wars* characters and all four pilots. The hut is a little more interactive, as clicking on various objects produces some cute animated responses. The hut also leads to a jukebox room, where kids can sample music and, best of all, view printable trading cards with fun *Star Wars*-inspired vocabulary. The

scenes in the game are also printable, so kids can take advantage of all that lovely animation, either by coloring in the images or laminating and saving them.

When it's all said and done, *Anakin's Speedway* simply doesn't have much to offer besides its special effects. The track creation is fun, the Podracer's Hut is cute, as are the *Episode I* characters, such as the two-headed announcer Fode and Beed. But methinks your child won't be inclined to come back to this CD-ROM once he or she has exhausted its array of play.

It's a pretty fancy one-trick pony, but it won't live forever in the hearts and minds of your kids ... much like the most recent movie itself.

— Molly Wood



rating

\$20, Lucas Learning
888-532-4263
www.lucasarts.com

Reader Rabbit Playtime for Baby

I'll admit I was skeptical of a computer program aimed at babies. *Reader Rabbit Playtime for Baby* was developed for children ages 9 to 24 months, which seemed bizarre at the outset. Even the CD-ROM's cute opening video of a proud papa and his Gerber baby happily pounding away at a keyboard failed to convince me.

But once I (a significantly older baby, to be sure) started fooling around with this adorable program, I was convinced that it would entertain a toddler for at least a little while. Certainly, the idea of convincing a baby less than a year old to sit at a computer seems improbable, at best. But *Reader Rabbit Playtime for Baby's* developers aptly point out that children love to imitate their elders, and this series offers an age-appropriate outlet for some of that curiosity.

Reader Rabbit Playtime for Baby is perfectly designed for a very young child. It has bright, colorful screens, songs, friendly voices, and an incredibly responsive interface. Your child can simply move the mouse aimlessly across the screen — with no clicking — and magical things will happen. With most activities, simply banging on the keyboard will produce the desired effect, and it's not hard to imagine a young child banging on keys!

The two-CD *Reader Rabbit* set includes a CD-ROM full of activities and games, and a second CD of 17 sing-along songs, for use in an audio CD player. The songs are clever and cute, and offer an added dimension to the set that makes its \$30 price tag seem well worth it. The activities and games are cleverly and appropriately designed. A few are educational, but not to the point that they exceed a toddler's knowledge base. Your child may not know the entire alphabet, but *Reader Rabbit* doesn't try to teach the whole thing. Activities are presented in such a fun and interactive way that children will feel entertained the whole time. They teach skills such as matching and patterns,

and movement and coordination such as dancing, clapping, and singing. The activities also cover emotions, musical instruments, and parts of the body.

"Peekaboo Bubbles," for example, lets your child pop bubbles by moving the mouse or hitting the keyboard. As the bubbles pop, they splash paint on a canvas, which forms letters of the alphabet. As the picture is completed, a cartoon emerges, showing the letter of the alphabet and an animated object whose name begins with that letter.

Best of all, the interface is constantly moving. It's brightly colored and its elements are large and dynamic. The cursor, for example, is a big yellow star that trails

smaller stars as it moves around the screen. Directions are clear and uncomplicated. No one scene stays onscreen too long, and no activity lasts long enough for your young one to lose interest.

The program is obviously the product of a company accustomed to the nature of young children, and it adapts admirably to

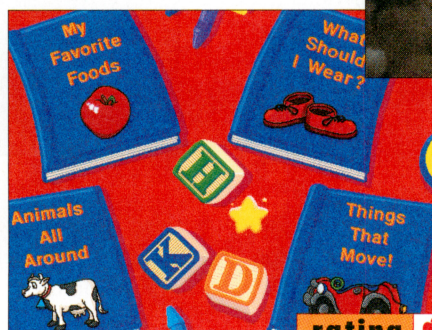
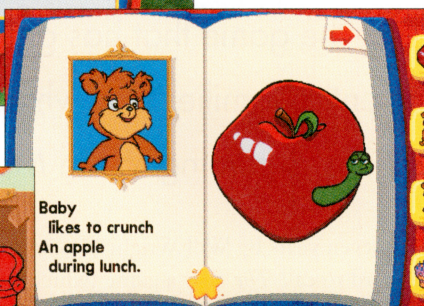
short attention spans.

The CD-ROM may be personalized with your child's name and photograph, and you can even record your toddler's voice into the program. Additionally, activities and cartoons may be printed for use away from the computer.

Even grownups are likely to be delighted with this program's ease of use and overall cuteness, although some of the songs leave a little

to be desired. If you can actually get your baby to sit still long enough to play *Reader Rabbit Playtime for Baby*, it will prove a fun activity and a great introduction to computers.

— Molly Wood



rating ★★★★★

\$30, The Learning Company
510-792-2101
www.learningco.com

Masters of the Universe

The Sims Comes to the Mac

A MacHome Exclusive

Perhaps you've heard the stories recounted by the water cooler, and assumed it was a new soap opera you simply hadn't seen. Or perhaps you're among the thousands of Mac gamers who have spent weeks clamoring for the game that has grownups and children alike playing puppet-master with entire families and whole neighborhoods. If so, your time has come. *The Sims* is coming to the Mac.

Developed over seven years by Will Wright of *SimCity* fame, it's almost hard to call *The Sims* a game (which, ingeniously enough, it is). If you've played *SimCity*, you're familiar with the idea of developing a society, monitoring its needs, helping it to thrive and grow. *The Sims* takes that concept to a whole new level. It's a simulation game whose elements are people, and you, the player, direct literally every aspect of their lives.

It's a recipe that's intriguing, dramatic, non-violent, and, for its producers, incredibly successful.

Since its February 4 release by Maxis (who publishes the *SimCity* series as well), *The Sims* has become the nation's hottest-selling game, according to PC Data, a company that tracks such things. In its first two months on the market, the game

became Maxis' fastest-selling ever, moving nearly a million copies. It's garnered press attention not just from industry rags, but from publications like *Time* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *U.S. News & World Report*, and ABC news.

Not surprisingly, that popularity touched off a firestorm of envy in the Macintosh community. One of the dozens of Websites spawned from the game's popularity, Sims Network Gaming, actually launched a petition "demanding the release of a Mac version of *The Sims*," and gathered some 1,200 signatures. Not that Mac game developers didn't already know there was a little bit of demand.

"We get hundreds of emails a week requesting new



titles, and an incredible majority of those [were] asking for *The Sims*," says Jeff Baietto, president of Aspyr Media, which won the contract to port *The Sims*. "It's an unbelievable percentage. It's going to be huge for us."

The Real World

Strangely enough, *The Sims* began as an architecture game, says creator Wright.

"It was like *SimCity*, only with architecture," he told *MacHome*. "But I realized that in order to do the house you designed, you had to have people living in it. The game went off and developed this robust personality, and the focus of the game kind of shifted into managing

By Molly Wood

(those people's) lives."

Sound intense? It is. *The Sims* have real-life needs: they have to eat, healthily and regularly; they have to go to the bathroom; they crave comfort and stability; they fall in love; they get sick; they die. You, the player, find them jobs, advance their careers, build or buy them houses, even let them lollygag about the house in sloth. They interact with each other — they can become friends, get married, have affairs, argue, or fight.

The game is persistent: Left to their own devices, the Sims evolve on their own. Players complain that their Sims lack motivation — they won't go to work unless directed, they'll leave trash all over the house, or they'll watch TV for days. Endow them with various characteristics, however, and you can create ambitious overachievers or social butterflies. Design entire families, complete with children, or inhabit a house with a slothful bachelor, or two flirty roommates.

Your Sims have fairly basic requirements, or "motives:" Bladder, Fun, Hunger, Hygiene, Social, Comfort, Energy, and Room. Like a makeshift Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you start off with the basics for your Sims — shelter and food. After you've decorated their home (choose from a variety of furniture, electronics, art, even plants, or go shopping at one of the many spin-off Websites *The Sims* has spawned), you can find them jobs, get them some friends, entertain them, and create the story of their lives essentially at will.

Sims flirt, read, play video games, have relationships, get married, even have babies (there's no sex onscreen, however, and the babies appear somewhat miraculously from thin air). Perhaps most uniquely, however, the game has no defined "goals." There's no way to win or lose *The Sims*, much like the goofy game of life itself.

"You have to strive to achieve balance," Wright says. "Balance between work and family or friends and leisure, or the bigger balance between social and antisocial behaviors. There are a lot of goals you can decide on. It's up to the players to make up the story."

The Sims is almost freakishly addictive, and almost eerily realistic. The game's interface itself lends to the overall feel, with remarkably accurate animation and human behaviors, and the temptation of creating a lilliputian mirror of your own life is almost irresistible.

"You can reasonably put in yourself and your family and kind of play it as a game about your life," Wright says.

"It becomes kind of a spreadsheet for lifestyles. What if I was a real slacker? What if I was a workaholic? You end up with this kind of weird self-portrait."

It's just that kind of real-life approach that has made *The Sims* such a hit, analysts say. Baietto and the folks at Apple say the popularity is certain to translate.

Bring it On

Apple's resurgence, as we know, has led to millions of brand-new Macintosh — particularly iMac — owners, meaning hundreds of thousands of users who may be new to the Mac market or to computers in general. And many of those people are definitely new to games, says Mark Adams, president of Westlake Interactive, which is porting *The Sims* for the Mac.

"There are millions and millions of people that have bought these iMacs, and at some point somebody's going to sell something to these people besides the machine they've bought," he says. "We haven't seen any of the games we've done in the last year and a half really take off relative to the fact that Apple has sold three or four million iMacs."

Baietto, Apple, and the programmers at Westlake are looking to *The Sims* to be that game.

"This year's lineup of top-notch games for the Mac was already phenomenal, and to see a title like this with such mass appeal really drives home the fact that Mac gaming is more than alive and well:



it's thriving," says Clent Richardson, Apple's VP of worldwide developer relations. "That's good news for all Macintosh game developers and publishers." Baietto says the appeal of *The Sims* is certainly remarkable, but it makes sense on some level.

"It's a life simulator, and everyone relates to that," he says. "I think the feeling Apple shares and certainly we do, is that this is the game that could bridge the gap with the iMac gamer."

The SimSkinny...

The Sims should be shipping for the Mac by mid-July. Pre-orders can be placed at the Aspyr Website www.aspyr.com or by calling **888-212-7797**. *The Sims* retails for \$50.

Says Wright: "What I hear over and over is these hard-core gamers, mostly men, bringing it home and playing it and saying, 'this is the first game that my wife or my girlfriend ever showed interest in.'"

"There's a high percentage of female players, for a game anyway," he says. "This game is about real life."

The creativity involved in playing *The Sims* is astonishing, too, which developers say appeals to a broader market than the average first-person shooter, such as *Quake* or *Unreal Tournament*, or a sports game such as *Madden NFL 2000*. Players need not stop with controlling the lives of their Sims — they can also have a little Martha Stewart decorating festival, adding wallpaper, floors, art, and gardens.



The architecture aspect of *The Sims* is still very much intact, and players can build a dream home, add on to existing homes, landscape, and more.

Even the music of *The Sims* can be suited to please. All the music is MP3-based, so you can import your own favorites and have your Sims listen to Britney Spears or Tupac Shakur.

"It's an environment that everybody knows," Wright says. The course of the game is an exercise in imagination. *The Sims* has built-in tools that allow you to take snapshots of your Sims as they evolve, and to write stories and narratives for the Sims. These lead not only to family albums, but to somewhat remarkable stories. Maxis, thoughtfully, has provided an outlet for the growing ranks of Sims enthusiasts to share those stories.

A Whole New World

Stories lend themselves to storytelling, and what better subject matter than the intricacies of life, love, and tragedy? *The Sims* has all of the above, and people are simply transfixed. As players write stories for their Sims, they can share them on *The Sims'* official Website (www.thesims.com). Registered users upload their stories and family albums for download by other players, and while there is currently no multiplayer option for the game, the stories themselves are the stuff of screenplay.

Visit the Website and you can browse the Sims stories by category: family, fantasy,

horror, comedy, action, tragedy, romance, adventure, historical, sci-fi, and mystery. Some of the yarns degenerate into the worst of the Web: a popular *Sims* download is "The Sadist," a character who torments the

Sims until they die. But others are truly stellar. So impressive, intricate, and remarkable, in fact, that Maxis developed a contest, "The Simmys," to reward ingenious storytellers.

As with real life, the possibilities are endless. Fan Websites allow you to download "skins" for your Sims, to turn them into celebrities or customized characters. A Sims Mall has sprung up, where you can outfit your charges in the most stylish fashions, buy them fabulous furniture, or get the latest in home electronics.

The game is designed to be ever-evolving, Wright says.

"The behaviors are embedded in the objects (you add to the game)," he says. "So we can expand the simulation every time by adding objects. You download something and new things happen in the game. They're not just graphic objects, they're code."

For example, he says, Maxis deviously introduced sickness to *The Sims* by way of a seemingly harmless guinea pig. Once you downloaded the pet, it could bite you, and thereby make you ill. The illness could be passed on, and without treatment, could actually kill the Sims. Maxis, Wright says, has plans to put source code online so hard-core programmer types can actually write elements of the game (as if the dozens of spin-off Websites weren't entertaining enough). Also, plans for multiplayer support are in the works — imagine, a universe of Sims as large as the Internet.

SimFuture

There are a lot of fads out there in cyberspace, a lot of cultish followings, a lot of one-time wonders. *The Sims* is none of the above.

In fact, it's probably fair to say *The Sims* represents a whole new universe in computer games, much as *SimCity* itself did, or games such as *Myst* and *Doom*, which inspired entire genres. *The Sims'* Website gets millions of unique hits every day, with visitors spending an average of 15 to 20 minutes there, and returning every day for more. Mac gamers have been clamoring for it for weeks, and Baietto predicts that as a new wave of advertising promotes outside the usual channels, *The Sims'* popularity will only continue to grow.

"I can't pretend to understand how (Wright) came up with the game, or why it has such an incredible acceptance, but I think it touches everyone," Baietto says. "There's a little bit of a feeling that you're playing God, and if your Sims continue to do well, you feel like they might not do as well if you weren't there. It makes you feel important."

"I think a lot of people know about the game now," he says. "But with more advertising and the Mac release, we think it may go out of this world."

Or turn into a whole new one. **MHJ**

Some Sims links

www.thesims.com

The official Website of *The Sims*. Sim-shopping, stories, links, news, chats, and more.

www.sngaming.com

Sim Network Gaming. Coverage of Sims events, links, news, and tips.

www.mallofthesims.com

Shop for clothes, furniture, electronics, flooring, entertainment, and more. Contains boutiques, pet stores, even a costume shop.

www.simsonline.com

Includes news, tips, game cheats, polls (this month: "What's your favorite way to kill off your Sims?"), and highlights.



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irez
Looking beyond the beyond...

Get It? Got It? Good.

Graphic Simulation's *Baldur's Gate* began beta testing for the Mac version as of press time.

By Molly Wood

Hopefully, by the time you read this, it will have hit the shelves. The company is hoping for a May release date. The Mac version, by the bye, will ship on five — count 'em, five CDs. Graphic Simulation says the initial release will not include multi-player support because of the "overwhelming demand" for the single-player version.

They're promising a free, downloadable upgrade shortly after the game's release. Speaking of GraphSim releases, however, check out *F/A-18 Korea Gold*, which was to ship in March. A fantastic update to what *MacHome* dubbed one of the best Mac games of all time, the *Gold* edition now runs on new-generation Macs, with support for OpenGL and the latest 3dfx Voodoo hardware. It's also got multiplayer support and support for USB joysticks, in addition to its general fabulousness.

www.graphsim.com
972-386-7575



Bram Stoker Rolling Over

DreamCatcher Interactive, a distributor to which this editor has only recently become hip, has two new Mac titles for release. The newest title, due in June, is based on the characters from Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*. As we all know, the book ended with Dracula staked in the heart and then turned to dust by the sun. Well, in the tradition of slasher horror films during which no one ever dies, *Dracula: Resurrection* brings the toothy devil back to life,

and picks up seven years from where the book left off. Hero Jonathan and perennially bitten Mina are married and living comfortably in London until one day when Jonathan returns home to find that Mina has left for

Transylvania.

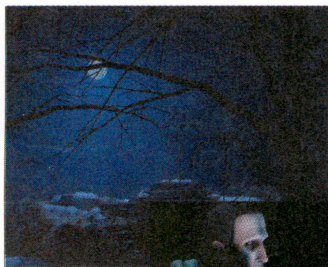
See, she was bitten in the book, if you'll recall, and now that Dracula has found a way to reassemble his atoms, she's unable to ignore the longing in her veins! The game boasts creepy graphics, including a full moon panorama, a haunting musical score, and a rich storyline. The Mac version is expected to ship in June.

Also look to DreamCatcher for *Riddle of the Sphinx*, released this spring. It's a first-person puzzle adventure that offers the treasures of the Pharaohs, undiscovered tombs, buried secrets, ancient scrolls, and Egyptian curses. In the game, you (the player) are sent for by your closest friend and colleague, a doomed archaeologist who discovers an ancient papyrus scroll he thinks contains the key to the riddle of

the Sphinx. Unfortunately, the scroll, of course, is cursed, and your pal promptly dies. You, then, are charged with deciphering the *Riddle* using your doomed colleague's carefully hidden notes and translation of the scroll, which, of course, has disappeared. Nothing like curses, skeletons, dust, and ancient papyrus to give you a rollicking good adventure!

DreamCatcher Interactive

www.dreamcatchergames.com, 888-611-9999



Aspyr. Our Heroes

By the time you read this, the expansion pack for the award-winning *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* could be available and in your hot little hands. *Sid Meier's Alien Crossfire* (SMAC X) was in the works and moving along, according to Aspyr representatives, "like a cheetah on wheels." The expansion pack includes seven new customizable opponents and other new gameplay additions. For those of you who haven't seen *Alpha Centauri*, (5 apples, April 2000) it's a turn-based, empire-building strategy game that takes place amid the struggle to colonize a new planet, *Alpha Centauri*. Two alien factions and the original inhabitants of the planet are battling for control, and you, the player, have to decide whether to make war or use diplomacy as you build your colonies. You'll need the full version of the game, not the demo, in order to make use of the expansion pack. Also, though most of you probably have it by now, be sure to look for the update to the game, *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri Update 1.41*, which clears up graphics glitches and keyboard command issues. The update can be had at Aspyr's Website and other gaming sites. While you're at it, check out Aspyr's newsletter, for continuing updates and news.

www.aspyr.com, 888-212-7797

Game Beginning, Man!

Look for *Aliens vs. Predators* to hit the

Mac any day now. Logicware, under contract with Fox Interactive, has been working on the port for a while now, and said in March it had neared the late beta stage. The



game, which combines elements from the films *Alien* and *Predator*, can be played from one of three first-person gaming perspectives. Play as the alien, replete with thrashing tail, vicious claws, and not one but two toothsome heads; as the Predator, with wrist blades, a shoulder cannon, and energy and projectile weapons; or, (and frankly I can't imagine why you'd want to), you can choose to be the Colonial Marine and pit your piddling human self against these otherworldly foes. AvP boasts a new 3D engine that offers completely free movement, as well as online multiplayer capabilities. A spring release was predicted.

www.logicware.com

888-564-4245

Classic Kickback

Ambrosia Software has recycled

one of its old classics for the next generation Macs. *Apeiron*, originally written by Andrew Welch, debuted in 1995 and was a big hit for Ambrosia. Happily, it's now been updated to support USB devices (after all these years!). The game takes place in a psychedelic mushroom-patch that is home to the ravenous Pentipede. The object of the game is to fight the Pentipede and other garden-dwelling monsters with a plasma blaster. Powerup coins hidden in the patch give you the extra, occasional boost. Addictive, cheap shareware. Get it now at Ambrosia's Website!

Apeiron, \$15

www.AmbrosiaSW.com, 800-231-1816

hot link...

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www.gamasutra.com

Get Thee to a Cineplex

In the obligatory hot-chick news category, scuttlebutt has it that newly crowned Oscar winner (and erstwhile goth goddess ... who knew?) Angelina Jolie has been in final negotiations to play that oh-so-outrageously attractive archaeologist, Lara Croft, in a film version of *Tomb Raider*. Paramount has had the game-gone-movie in the works for quite some time now, with shooting tentatively scheduled to begin this summer.

www.paramount.com

Tomb Raider, Aspyr

King of the Hill

King of Dragon Pass, the role-playing wonder from A Sharp

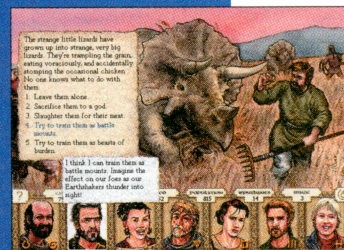
(4 1/2 apples, February 2000) continues to

rack up indie accolades. It won the "Best Visual Art" award at the second Independent Games Festival, which is a little like the Sundance Film Festival for games. The award was announced in March at the Game Developers Conference in San Jose, California. *King of Dragon's Pass*, based on

the tabletop role-playing game *RuneQuest*, plays a little like a choose-your-own adventure book, only much, much more beautiful. You, the player, are leader of a clan newly relocated to land that was once inhabited by dragons. Gameplay includes resource management, diplomacy, battle, and exploration. We dubbed it a sleeper hit back in February — looks like we could be right!

King of Dragon Pass

www.a-sharp.com



On Deck

Keep an eye on MacSoft in the next couple of months. The venerable Mac games publisher has announced its spring lineup (well, and maybe the odd winter title, too). Expected at press time, and possibly even out by the time you read this, were *Monopoly*, *Scrabble*, *Worms Armageddon*, and *Bingo*. Also planned by early spring is *Driver*, a game that mimics Hollywood-style car chases with 1970s-style muscle cars. Plus, look for that eternal flame of a game, *Asteroids*, to debut in late winter.

MacSoft

www.wizworks.com/macsoft

The Orient Express

Admittedly, I've got an inherent bias when it comes to reviewing this game. I adore trains, I'm fascinated by The Orient Express, and the mere suggestion of locomotives sends me into a fit of daydreaming à la Dr. Zhivago. So of course, when *The Orient Express* by Wrebbit Interactive crossed my desk, I was immediately entranced.

The Orient Express is a puzzle/adventure series — the fourth in Wrebbit's Puzz3D lineup — in which you must recreate the famous luxury train as a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. That task alone involves spatial reasoning, hundreds of puzzle pieces, time, patience, and curiosity.

The puzzle begins according to the level you choose — easy, intermediate, or hard. You reassemble the train's locomotive, coal car, and Pullman car, and along the way, you're treated to informational videos about the famed Orient Express and the line that ran from Paris to Istanbul in the early 20th century (see, you've learned something already!). Completing the first three pieces gives you a second-class ticket, and access to a bit more of the train.

Cleverly designed, the jigsaw portion of the game takes place on a large, horseshoe-shaped work-table. You can toggle the view of the table from overhead, life-sized, and three levels of magnification, in order to really see which edges snap together. As you complete pieces — or find completed pieces on the table — you drop them into a tray, carry them to the construction room, and place them onto a 3D pattern. The puzzle comes complete with sorting trays, which, once you figure out how to use them effectively, are extremely helpful.

The game isn't just a jigsaw puzzle, though. It also includes a complete storyline based on a fictitious trip taken in 1922. Characters include an anti-Fascist Italian flapper, an exasperating gypsy clairvoyant with a painfully phony Russian accent, a black American jazz singer, a Turkish Egyptologist, and others.

All are abuzz with expectation because a "mystery passenger" is expected to board the train somewhere in Germany. The characters are goofy, satirical, and incredibly cheesy, but as the story evolves into a kooky mystery about undercover agents threatening the mystery VIP, you feel sucked in almost despite yourself. Unraveling the mystery also involves gathering Mah-Jongg tiles scattered throughout the finished puzzle cars.

Since the program combines both 3D graphics and video, it works best if it can switch monitor resolution as often as necessary. You can toggle this feature to keep it from switching constantly, as this can become distracting, but even the little switching I allowed it to do tended to rearrange my desktop in a fairly irritating fashion. (Ever lost the trash can? It's no fun.)

I also found that the puzzle piece display was sometimes hard to see unless magnified three times, which only lets you view about four puzzle pieces. The edges of the pieces are not always clear, and when two small pieces snap together to form a 3D image, one side can be completely obscured.

The train cars designed in this game are incredibly detailed and realistic, however, giving you the feel of recreating a high-quality model. For the history buff, you'll find the game remarkably authentic and well researched. The historical tidbits throughout are fascinating, and the storyline incorporates elements from T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland," a poem that satirized the society of the Roaring '20s, as well as plot elements from

Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. There is an air of authority about this game that is both impressive and informative.

The Orient Express is an extremely complex, well conceived game that respects the history of the 1920s, the train and its route, and, frankly, the art of jigsaw puzzles. Even if you ignore the kooky characters, the Mah-Jongg, and the burgeoning storyline, the jigsaw puzzles alone, and the incredibly detailed train cars they eventually produce, will keep you hooked for hours.

— Molly Wood



rating ★★★★★

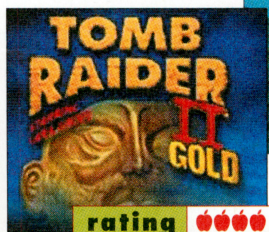
\$20, Wrebbit Interactive
www.wrebbit.com

Tomb Raider II Gold

I must be one of the last to play a *Tomb Raider* game. Until late last year, I was never drawn to the series; the concept seemed to be a rudimentary platform game whose only unique facet was a big-busted heroine. However, when I finally did decide to play a *Tomb Raider* game (*Tomb Raider III*, in fact), I was honestly impressed. It was clear the developers took the time to think level structure through, as well as provide complex puzzles. In any case, I became hooked. Just after I finished with *Tomb Raider III*, Aspyr Media announced that *Tomb Raider II Gold* would make its way to the

Mac. Is it any good? Yes. Is there anything new? Sort of.

Included in the free download (for current owners of *Tomb Raider II*) is



rating ★★★★

Tomb Raider II Gold
Free Download (must own
Tomb Raider II), Aspyr Media
888-212-7797
www.aspyr.com

a set of completely new missions. There are new vehicles and some new enemies as well. For the most part, however, it's simply an extension of *Tomb Raider II*.

Graphics aren't any better, and gameplay mechanics stay the same, so don't expect an entirely new game.

Even so, the product is free if you own *Tomb Raider II* (the *Gold* edition won't run unless the *Tomb Raider II* CD is in your Mac). Given that fact, it's hard to not recommend this game. If you don't own *Tomb Raider II*, however, consider purchasing the latest volume in the series, *Tomb Raider III*. The graphics are better, gameplay is improved, and the levels are somewhat more complex. If you're not ready to take the next step, though, downloading the *Gold* edition should provide enough of a boost to *Tomb Raider II* to keep you entertained for a few more months.

— Rafi Guroian

Last Call

Maybe I'm showing my age, but it seems rare that we find computer games these days that aren't afraid to stagger off in a completely different direction from the rest of the industry. Whether it's *Quake* or *Unreal*, *Warcraft* or *Age of Empires*, games seem to be too formulaic these days. But just when I had all but accepted this theory as law, along comes a game like *Last Call*. Not since *You Don't Know Jack* or possibly even the *Leisure Suit Larry* series has a game had the guts to ride against the grain and bring the com-

puter gamer something completely different, yet brilliant. The basic premise behind *Last Call* is incredibly simple; you play the role of a struggling bartender who must serve drinks (and serve them well) to a variety of patrons. While that may be the premise, the simple point of the game is to just have fun. *Last Call* includes a vast encyclopedia of drink recipes (every drink we could think of was included) as well as a wide variety of customers.

My one and only complaint is that you can't print the drink recipes, and you can only view them during gameplay. While the animation (yes, this game is animated) may seem low-budget, the voice-overs are fairly impressive for such an inexpensive game. Characters range from the stereotypical lounge lizard to superheroes, all very well voiced, and extremely funny to listen to.

Parents should be aware that this game is rated "M" for Mature — it doesn't hesitate to include some crude language and blatant drunken animation. If you're looking for a change from the rudimentary blood baths of your favorite first-person shooter, or if you just want to impress your dorm mates, *Last Call* is an excellent buy.

— Rafi Guroian

rating ★★★★

\$20, Simon & Schuster
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Exploring Energy Saver

Grasp the Full Power of this Understated Control Panel

The Mac OS's Energy Saver control panel contains a gamut of options that allow you to save energy as well as increase efficiency. The controls generally have more relevance for iBook and PowerBook owners since the settings can help eke extra life out of the battery.

Still, the control panel offers key features, such as automatic startup and shutdown, that can help increase the utility of your iMac or Power Macintosh.

Idle Sleep (iBook, PowerBook)

Launch the Energy Saver control panel and click the Idle Sleep button. This reveals a slide control that varies between Better Conservation and Better Performance. The pop-up menu at the top allows you to choose separate settings for both the battery and the power adapter.

As a rule, you should set the slider to Better Conservation for the battery. This ensures that energy is saved at every opportunity in an effort to maximize battery life, by powering down the hard drive, dimming the display, and finally, putting the portable to sleep after a short time of idleness.

By Chris McVeigh

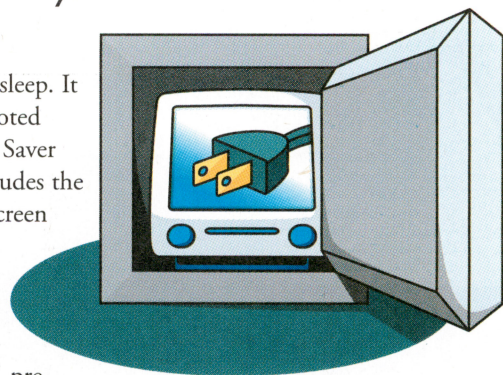
Set the slide control to Better Performance for the Power Adapter. This adjusts the sleep settings so that the portable remains ready for action, avoiding annoyingly frequent lapses into sleep.

More advanced users can control each of these settings individually by clicking the Show Details button in the bottom right. The window expands, unveiling slide controls for system, display, and hard disk sleep.

Sleep Setup (iMac, Power Macintosh)

Launch the Energy Saver control panel and click the Sleep Setup button. This reveals a slide control that lets you determine when your computer will power down its hard drive and monitor, in an effort to save energy. The default setting is 30 minutes, and for most users, it's a good fit. Advanced users can click the Show Details button in the bottom right to set individual times for both hard drive

and display sleep. It should be noted that Energy Saver largely precludes the need for a screen saver. After 30 minutes, your display is powered off, preventing the screen image to be burned in permanently. Of course, a darkened screen is rather boring.

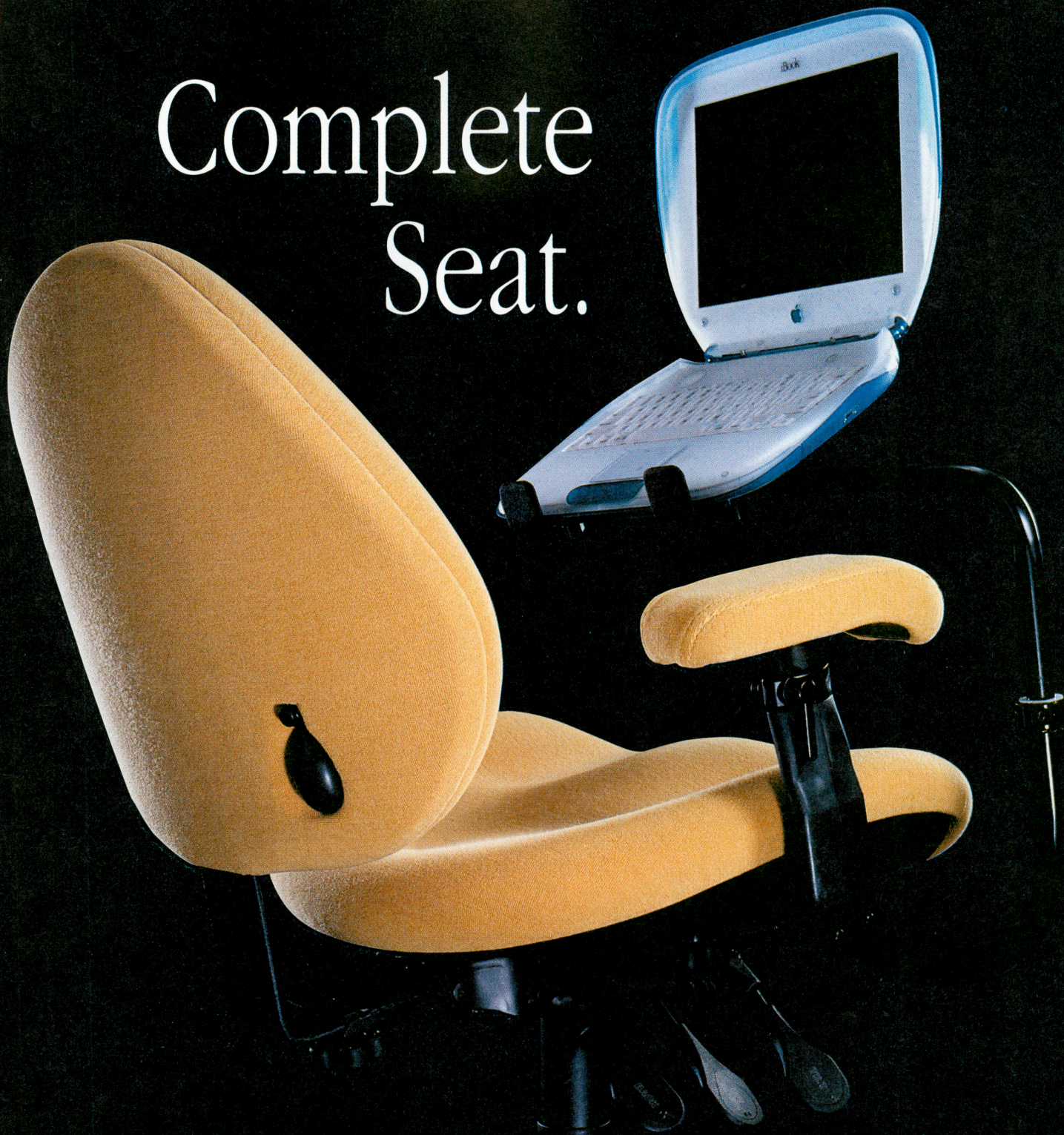


Schedule

Energy Saver's Schedule allows you to set a specific time for your computer to wake up and go to sleep. Check "Wake up the computer" and then specify the days you want the computer to automatically rise. Those of you wanting to see your Macintosh get up early can select Everyday from the pop-up menu and set the time to, say, 7:45, if you're an early riser. By the time you get showered and dressed, your Mac will be ready to work.

iMac and Power Macintosh users will notice a box titled Schedule Options, which offers you the choice of shutting down the computer instead of putting it to sleep. Automatic startup can be an especially useful feature, for example, if you regularly receive large files via email. Set your email application to automatically log on and receive your mail every morning at 6:00. To do this, place an alias of your email program in your iMac's Startup Items folder, and then set Energy Saver to start up your iMac every morning at 5:50. By the time you get up, get dressed, and sit down at your iMac, all your email will have been downloaded. **MHJ**

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BODYBILT

From Space To The Workplace

Freezing Woes, Sleep Disorders, and Email Angst

Q My iMac DV SE freezes up every time I wake it up. Any ideas? I've talked to several tech support people and they act like I'm the only person having this problem.

Mike Gentry

A The iMac's sleep disorder is caused by a bug in the Apple Audio Extension. Thankfully, there's a fix. Simply download and install the Mac OS 9 Audio Update 1.3 at <http://asu.info.apple.com/swupdates.nsf/rtnum/n11573>.

Q When email is deleted, is it gone forever or does it remain available for a knowledgeable person to dredge up again?

Bob Justice

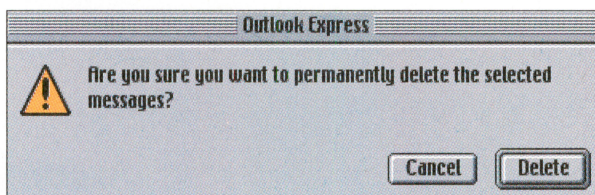
A Under most circumstances, deleted email is unrecoverable. It is wiped from your email application's message database, leaving no trace of its existence. There are a few exceptions to this rule, however.

By Chris McVeigh

Outlook Express 5, one of the most popular email applications for the Macintosh, permanently deletes a single email message when you click the Delete button at the top of the window. However, when you select multiple items, including some which have not been read (perhaps they are junk mail), the messages are actually tossed into the Deleted Items folder. The messages remain there until you go into the Deleted Items folder, choose Select

All from the Edit menu, and then click the Delete button. A message then appears, asking if you'd like to permanently delete the selected messages. Outlook Express users looking to permanently delete messages should make sure they have been deleted and not simply relocated to the Deleted Items folder.

Office email systems and Web-based email services are sometimes more vulnerable to prying eyes. In such cases, email is stored on a central server rather than the user's computer. Although there are many secu-



rity protocols to override, it is theoretically possible that your mailbox can be violated. It's thus a good idea to be cautious of making embarrassing or inflammatory comments.

You can encrypt sensitive documents before emailing them with Mac OS 9's File Security application. Speak with your colleagues via online chat, telephone, or in person to predetermine a password for files you intend to exchange. Simply drag a document or folder onto the Apple File Security icon, type in the password, and then attach the encrypted file to your outgoing email message.

Q I have owned a Macintosh SE for many years now and I recently purchased a new iMac with an external SuperDisk drive. Whenever I insert an old Mac SE disk into the external SuperDisk drive, I always get the message "This disk is unreadable by this computer. Would you like to initialize the disk?" My question is why can't new Macs run old Mac software?

Matthew Curtis Rushing

A All Macintoshes have the ability to read files created by their predecessors. However, your problem is somewhat different. The Macintosh SE used a floppy drive capable of reading and writing 800K disks.

Later Macintoshes included floppy drives that read and wrote both 800K and high-density 1.44MB floppies. Unfortunately, the SuperDisk sup-

have questions?

Got a Mac problem that's driving you nuts? Let us take a crack at it. We'll answer questions of general interest to all readers. All mail is assumed intended for publication, and we reserve the right to edit questions for brevity and clarity. When sending your questions, include your full name and phone number. Send your questions to:

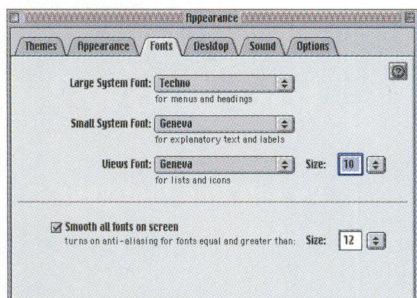
questions@machome.com

ports only the 1.44MB floppy standard. When you insert your old 800K disks into the SuperDisk drive, it doesn't know what to make of it. Your data is still intact; it just cannot be read by the drive. In order to get at your old files, you'll need to find a friend with an older, beige Macintosh. Have them copy the data from your 800K disks to 1.44MB floppies, which can be read by your SuperDisk drive.

Q I've noticed that my friend seems to have much more readable fonts on his iMac. I watched him use Microsoft Word one day and was awestruck by how smooth his fonts appear. How can this be? Our iMacs only differ in color.

Perry Wilson

A Your friend has found his way to the Appearance control panel and has turned on font smoothing. Font smoothing (also known as anti-aliasing)



is a technology that uses gray pixels of different intensities to eliminate jagged edges for a much smoother appearance. To turn on Font Smoothing, open the Appearance control panel and click the tab marked Fonts. At the bottom of the window, you'll see an option titled "Smooth all fonts onscreen." Check off this item and close the control panel. Open Microsoft Word or even Internet Explorer and take a look. You'll see that the display fonts are now much smoother in appearance. A word of caution: not all fonts look great when smoothed at a small size. Experiment with different fonts to determine which looks best.

Q I seem to have trouble shutting my iMac down every so often.

The light on the computer will remain on until I pull the plug. After several occurrences, the computer will crash and will repair itself as it reboots. I can then shut the computer down again normally until the next episode. What am I doing wrong?

MBH

A The problem you describe is a known issue with the original series iMacs. Unfortunately, there's no easy fix. The iMac's analog board — the part of the computer that regulates the power — has a hardware flaw, and must be replaced. You'll need to lug the iMac to an authorized Apple service provider and have a technician make a definitive diagnosis.

Q I am operating a Power Mac 6500/250 with a 603e processor. I have heard that Mac OS X requires a Macintosh with at least a G3 processor. If I upgrade my 6500 with a Sonnet G3/Level 2 Cache upgrade card, will that be the same as having a G3-based Macintosh? Can I install Mac OS X?

I'm trying to choose between a new upgrade card and an entirely new desktop system.

Shannon Travers

A It is unlikely that Mac OS X will support Macintosh systems upgraded with a G3 processor. Apple's software engineers have been developing Mac OS X for native Apple Macintosh G3/G4 systems. Each system — whether it is the iMac, iBook, PowerBook G3, or Power Macintosh G3 — is being run through a battery of tests with Mac OS X to ensure flawless operation. Given the gamut of iterations in each product line, you can be sure that Apple has its hands full. Now consider the fact that there are dozens of different G3 processor card upgrades available for dozens of different Power Macintosh and Macintosh clone systems. It is impossible for Apple to test each permutation of processor card and computer for Mac OS X compatibility. There are simply too many variables to take into account. Save your money and buy yourself a new iMac. You won't regret it. **MHJ**



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Saving Toolbar Favorites in Explorer

Internet Explorer 5 allows you to add your favorite sites to its toolbar. This can be very convenient, allowing you to access sites with one simple click. The first thing you'll want to do is get rid of Microsoft's own collection of sites that currently occupy the toolbar. Click on the Favorites tab at the left of the browser window. At the top you'll see a folder called Toolbar Favorites. Click once on the

folder to open it, use the mouse to select all the sites within the folder, and then press Delete. An alert window pops up, asking you to confirm your intent to delete the items; click OK and then close the Favorites window.

There are several easy ways to add your own items to the toolbar. The easiest is to simply drag any Web link you see in your browser window onto the toolbar. Another option is to click on the History tab and simply drag the entry for any recently visited page onto the toolbar.

Occasionally, you'll discover that some pages aren't properly named. Some

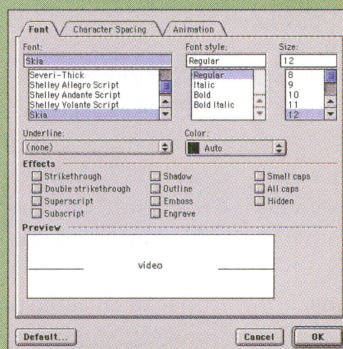
will be just an address, while others will have painfully long names. The shorter the site name, of course, the more items you can squeeze into the toolbar. Click on the Favorites tab and then click once on the Toolbars Favorites folder to pop it open. Hold down the control key and click on an item whose name you want to adjust. A contextual menu appears. Select Edit Name, and then enter an abbreviated title for the page.

Changing the Default Font in Microsoft Word

By Chris McVeigh

New users of Microsoft Word 98 often find the application bewildering. One case in point is the settings for the

default font. Although Times Roman is a reliable typeface, it is very old and generally overused. Many of you probably have a favorite font of your own that you use for all your printed correspondence. Ordinarily, you simply launch Word and then immediately select your preferred font from the Font menu. This can



quickly become tedious. Thankfully, Microsoft Word allows you to specify the default font. It's not where you'd expect to find it, however. No, Microsoft didn't think to put the default font setting in Word's Preferences panels. Instead, you must select Font from the Format menu. A window appears, allowing you to change the font style to anything you like. To make this the default font, simply click the Default button in the lower left corner. An alert window pops up, asking you to confirm the change. Click Yes, and continue your work.

Mouse Moving too Slow?

Do you find that your mouse is a little sluggish? Would you like the cursor

to cross your display a little quicker? Open the Mouse control panel. You'll find a slide control

allowing you to set the mouse tracking speed. Move the slider all the way to the right to give your mouse a real speed boost.



share your tips...

Got some tips you'd like to share with your fellow MacHome readers? Please send them to us at: **chris@machome.com**

All mail is assumed intended for publication, and we reserve the right to edit tips for brevity and clarity. When sending your tips, please make sure to include your full name.

Using iMovie with Older Video Cameras

Digital video cameras are relatively new to the consumer market, and as such, they remain rather expensive. It's difficult to hand over an additional \$800–\$1,200 for a digital camera after paying \$1,299 for your new iMac DV. It's even more frustrating if you already own a perfectly good video camera. That doesn't mean you can't use iMovie, however. We've got a \$130 solution to get you up and running with your old video camera.

The first thing you must do is purchase an XLR8 Interview (\$99, www.xlr8.com). This device allows you to capture video to your iMac via USB. The next thing you must do is go to www.apple.com/quicktime and pick up QuickTime Pro for \$30. You will be given a registration number to enter into the QuickTime control panel. This will unlock additional features of QuickTime Player.

Connect your camera to the Interview connector and record video to your iMac using the XLR8 Theatre application. Once you're done, double-click on the saved

movies to open them in QuickTime Player. Now, select Export from the File menu. Choose "Movie to DV Stream" from the Export pop-up menu found at the bottom of the Save dialog box. (Caution: Long movies can take a long time to convert to DV stream and will require a significant amount of hard drive space.)

Launch iMovie. A window will pop up asking if you'd like to create a new project or load an existing project. Click New Project and select Desktop from the pop-up menu in the top left. This saves your project folder on your desktop for quick access. Now quit iMovie and locate your project folder. Drag your DV format movies into the Media folder found within your project folder. Launch iMovie again. It will report that stray clips have been found in your project folder and will add them to your clip shelf. You're now ready to roll with iMovie! **MHJ**

Enhancing Game Performance

Owners of iMacs and Power Macintoshes with hard drive space to spare can enhance the performance of CD-ROM-based games using Disk Copy. Although CD and DVD drives become faster with each iteration, they still lag behind hard drives in raw performance. This can cause slowdowns when playing some games as the computer loads levels, movies, and other data from the CD. (It does not effect the performance of three-dimensional graphics.)

Avid gamers can take a digital "snapshot" of a CD using Apple's Disk Copy utility. This transfers all data from the disc onto the hard drive, keeping it in a file known as a "disk image." Disk Copy is usually found within your Utilities folder — if you can't find it, simply launch Sherlock and search for "Disk Copy".

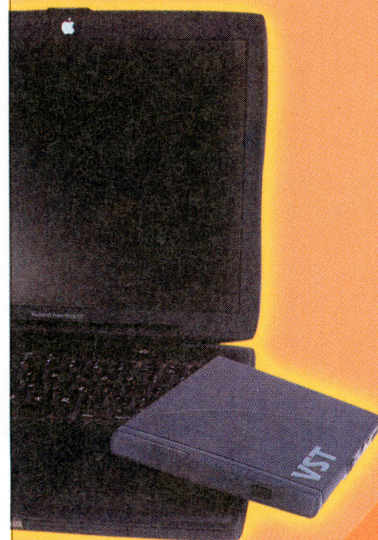
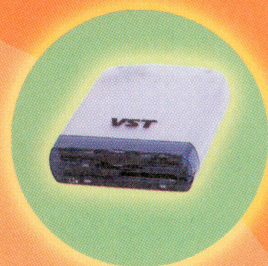
Insert your favorite game into the CD or DVD drive, and launch Disk Copy. Select "Create Image from Disk..." from the Image menu. Pick the game disc and then click Choose at the bottom right. Select a place to store the disk image (the desktop is ideal), and click Save. A snapshot of the disk will now be created. Once you return to the Finder, you will see two identical game discs on your desktop. Click on the uppermost game disc icon and drag it to the trash. This ejects the CD, and you can return it to its jewel case.

An icon of a blue disk on a white document also appears on your desktop. This is the actual disk image file and you must be careful not throw it away. Each time you restart your machine and decide to play the game, you'll need to double-click the disk image file to mount the game disc and access its contents. The CD will not be required.

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Input Devices

How Simple Movements of Your Hand Move the Cursor

Before the introduction of the Macintosh in 1984, cursor movement was accomplished by moving the arrow keys on the keyboard. The Mac's graphical user interface demanded more precise cursor control, however, which could only be accomplished with a radical device known as a "mouse."

Since then, several different devices have been created to translate simple hand gestures into cursor movements. This month we take a look at the technology behind the most popular modern input devices.

The Mouse

A simple mouse, such as the one shipping with the iMac, consists of a heavy, rubberized ball enclosed in plastic housing. A small opening on the underside of the mouse allows the ball to contact the surface below. Two

small rollers lie perpendicular to one another within the

mouse housing, each contacting the rubber ball. A third, stabilizing roller lies in the opposite corner to keep the ball in contact with the other rollers.

Moving the mouse to the left causes the ball to roll to the left. This in turn causes the lateral roller to spin clockwise. Circuitry within the mouse reads the direction and speed of the roller and sends that data to the Macintosh, where it is interpreted as a leftward motion of the cursor. Moving the mouse upward has a similar effect. The ball rolls forward, turning the rear roller in the opposite direction. The direction and speed of motion are once again fired off to the computer,

where they are interpreted as a forward motion of the cursor. Of course, mouse movements are not limited to simple left, right, forward, and backward gestures. The two rollers are often turned in unison and the ball is rolled in a myriad of directions. The speed and direction of each roller is constantly piped to the computer, where it is combined and interpreted as sweeping cursor motions.

The Trackball

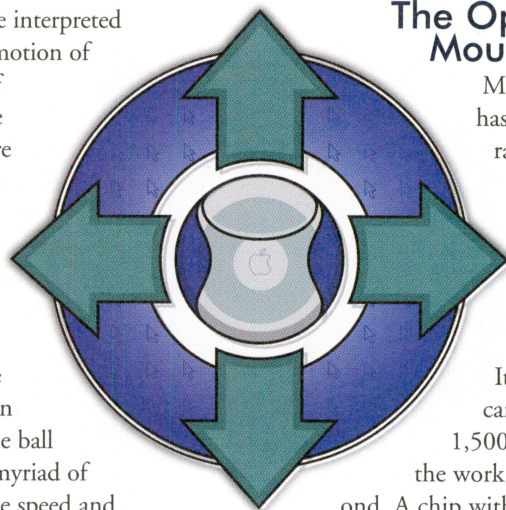
A trackball is like a large, overturned mouse, but instead of moving the plastic housing surrounding the ball, you manipulate the ball itself. Rollers lie to the side and rear of the ball, tracking its motion. Rolling the ball to the bottom right causes the lateral roller to spin counterclockwise and the rear roller to turn forward. The speed and direction of each roller are piped to your Macintosh, where they are interpreted as cursor movements.

The Optical Mouse

Mouse technology has remained rather stagnant, until Microsoft introduced the IntelliEye optical tracking technology.

It uses a tiny camera to capture 1,500 snapshots of the work surface per second. A chip within the mouse analyzes the differences between each image to determine which direction the mouse is moving. The instructions then travel to the Mac, where they are translated to cursor movements.

Optical technology has its benefits. Standard mice pick up dirt and grime from the surfaces they move over. The dirt collects on the rollers, which leads to unreliable contact with the ball and consequently, inaccurate mouse movements. It's very difficult to get an optical mouse so dirty as to affect its performance. Also, the technology doesn't require a mouse pad. Any surface will do — your desk, your leg, or even your dog's back. **MHJ**



By Chris McVeigh

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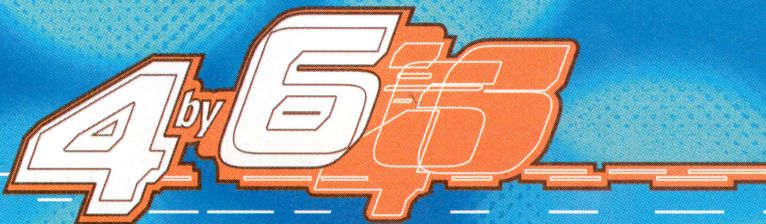


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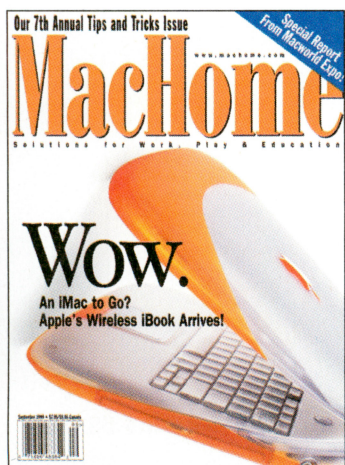
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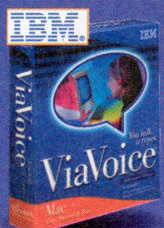
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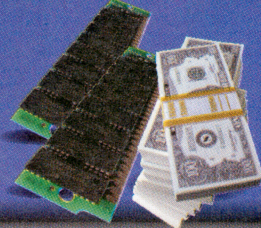
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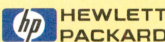
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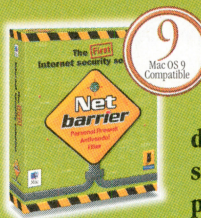
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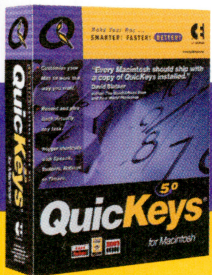
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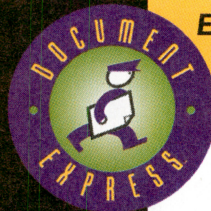
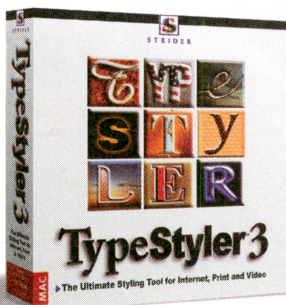
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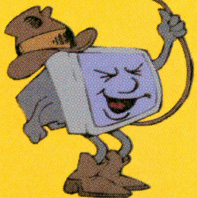


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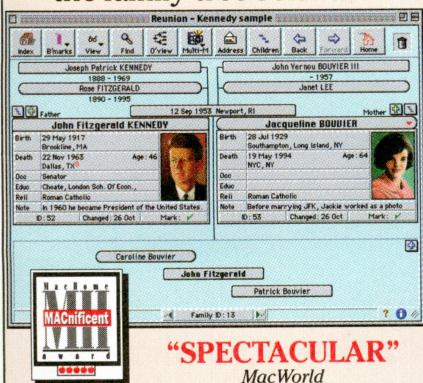
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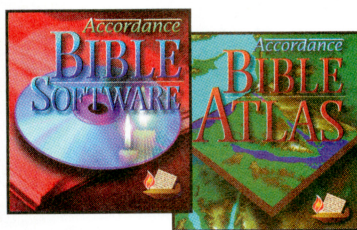
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*Proving You **Can** Take it with You, After All*

It's 4:30 A.M. and all is quiet on the maternity ward where my daughter, Emily Rose, was born less than fifteen hours ago. Typing on my PowerBook at the foot of my wife's bed, while tiny sighs float over the rim of my daughter's bassinet, I can't help but smile, amazed to unconditionally love this little girl I've only just met.

Overwhelmed and nowhere close to sleep, I've decided to use these precious minutes of down time to welcome you to my new Macs to Go column.

It seems only fitting that my first column comes to you from such an unlikely place, with my newest family member sleeping just a few feet away. After all, *MacHome* has always been dedicated to the integration of the Mac environment into how we work, play, and communicate with friends and family. With today's families constantly on the go, there is an increasing demand for mobile access to this

incredible environment — even from the maternity ward at 4:30 A.M.

By Alan S. Golub

Leave it to Apple to produce some of the most innovative mobile solutions on the planet. From last year's iBook and wireless AirPort technology, to this year's FireWire-ready PowerBook, Apple continues to mold the way we live, work, and think in this digital age. Macs to Go is dedicated to providing complete coverage of these creative mobile solutions for families who want to Think Different, no matter where they roam.

Within this column you'll find advice for maximizing your use and enjoyment of portable Macs. Naturally, the family-friendly iBook will get its due, but Macs to Go will go further to explore all Mac-compatible portable technologies — PowerBooks, Palm organizers, digital cameras, camcorders, MP3 players — you name it. Macs to Go will be bringing it on home to you.

And we'd like your help. Every few months, we will dedicate a Macs to Go column to answering questions about your portable Mac environment. Need advice on how to network your iBook with your Windows PC? Searching for a portable backup solution? Ask away, and

we'll do our best to provide simple, no-nonsense advice to get you back on the road in no time. You can send your Macs to Go questions to me via email at macs2go@machome.com.

But I'd be remiss in leaving you without a single tip, to whet your appetite for future columns, so here goes:

Some users believe that Apple should do away with the infrared technology that has graced every PowerPC portable ever built. This gripe stems from the fact that there are easier ways to transfer files from one Mac to another, including networking via Ethernet, and the more trendy wireless AirPort technology. And some feel that lining up two Macs with their IR ports facing each other when you need to transfer data is just too much of a hassle.

In my view, infrared is a viable technology for only one reason, but it's a great one: Infrared provides the quickest, easiest way to connect a Palm organizer with your PowerBook. Here's how:

Open the Palm Desktop application on your PowerBook and select Setup from the HotSync menu. Click the Serial Port Settings tab and select Local Setup. Set the Speed for "As fast as possible," and set the Port to Infrared Port. Close HotSync Setup.

On your Palm, open HotSync under System applications, and select Local and "IR to a PC/Handheld" as your modes of transmission.

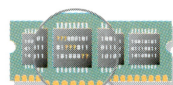
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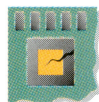
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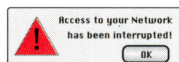
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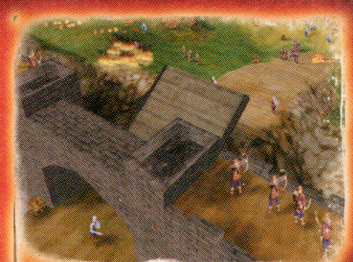
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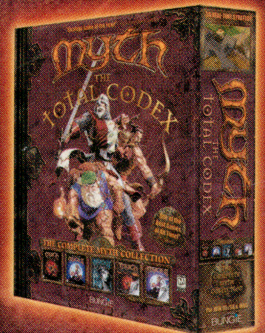
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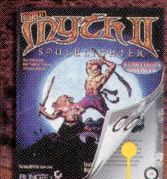
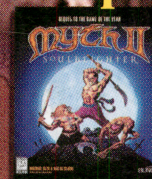
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